SAMPLE MARVEL MASTERPIECES™ TRADING CARD INSIDE!

MARVEL Age 118

• PETER DAVID ON WRITING — the hideous truth

• SECRETS BEHIND THE MARVEL MASTERPIECES™ TRADING CARDS

• DINOSAURS™

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30TH ANNIVERSARY 1962-1992

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

$1.50 US $1.80 CAN 80p UK

NUMBER 118 • NOVEMBER 1992

GEORGE PEREZ 92

SAMPLE MARVEL MASTERPIECES™ TRADING CARD INSIDE!

MARVEL Age® 118

• PETER DAVID ON WRITING
— the hideous truth

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• SECRETS BEHIND THE MARVEL MASTERPIECES™ TRADING CARDS

• DINOSAURS™

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MARVEL
Age
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
30TH ANNIVERSARY
1962-1992
THE INCREDIBLE HULK
$1.50 US $1.80 CAN 80p UK
NUMBER 118 • NOVEMBER 1992
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REAL LIFE SUPER HEROICS. . .

Marvel President Terry Stewart gives his time and effort to the U.S. Committee for UNICEF and the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse. Epic Editor Marc McLaurin talks to kids in the New York City schools, and writer/Assistant Editor Chris Cooper tutors children with reading problems. Editor Ralph Macchio is an active land preservation advocate, Epic Executive Editor Carl Potts is a member of the Sierra Club and the Cousteau Society, and Special Projects Executive Editor Bob Budiansky belongs to Greenpeace and Amnesty International. Assistant Editor Pat Garrahy works with handicapped kids and with Habitat for Humanity, an organization housing the underprivileged. Rob Tokar actively recycles the mountains of paper right here in the Marvel offices. I donate blood to the American Red Cross (the same people who offer First Aid, Lifesaving and CPR courses), work occasionally with city school kids, and belong to the New York Zoological Society.

The list goes on. Each and every one of us has realized that we are living, breathing members of the human race.

It's your planet, too. You live here, you have the right to ask that it be a great place, and you have the chance to help make it so. But getting involved can be difficult. I know I am often intimidated by the tremendous number of organizations asking for my support, and I generally don't have a clue as to which public service organizations I should join. More often, I think of things I can do as an individual.

Incorporate simple things into your everyday life, like taking the bag you got from your local comic book store and using it again the next time you buy your comics. Or, even better, buy a cloth bag of some sort and use it every time you shop. That way, you don't contribute to the mountains of paper and plastic bags piling up in garbage dumps.

Join a local community cleanup effort or get involved in a charity walk. Chances are you'll have fun, and make a bunch of new friends. As the holidays approach, there will be more and more opportunities for you to be an active member of society: food, clothing and toy drives for families and children; shelters to protect folks from the onset of winter.

Just remember, only get involved to the degree you feel completely comfortable. Only you can decide how much time, effort or money you can afford to give at any one time. Once you've decided, your efforts will help you learn what it feels like to be a hero.

For those of you who picked up this MARVEL AGE to get the sample *Marvel Masterpieces* trading card, you may want to grab the other publications that have similar sample cards: *Comics Buyers Guide Price Guide* (Silver Surfer), *Diamond Previews #8* (Spider-Man), *Heroes World #36* (Captain America), *Styx Up-And-Coming #21* (Wolverine) and *Wizard #13* (Psylocke). And remember, while you're enjoying the cards, *read* the magazines!

—STEVE SAFFEL

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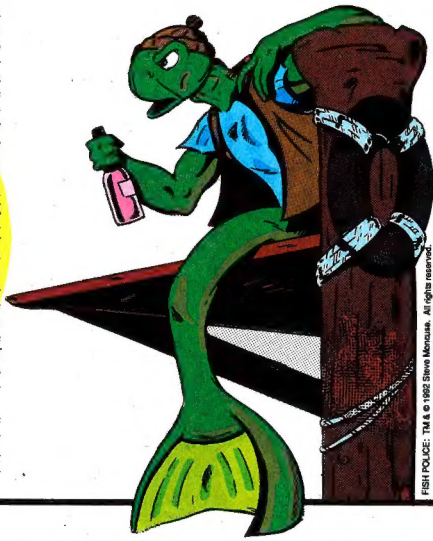
Up Front
ITEM! The SPIDER-MAN 30TH ANNIVERSARY POSTER MAGAZINE is exactly what the title says it is: a 32 poster collection celebrating the 30th birthday of everyone's favorite web slinger. Featuring an all-new poster and cover by Mark Bagley, the book's theme of "Spider-Man through the ages" includes art by every major artist who has ever drawn the character. Steve Ditko, John Romita, Frank Miller, John Byrne, Todd McFarlane and Erik Larsen are just a few of the great Spidey artists represented.
Containing posters of key moments in Spidey's illustrious career, as well as action shots of major Spidey villains, the magazine-sized, poster collection is more than just a bunch of cool art, it is a true retrospective on 30 years of Spider-Man stories.
From the death of Gwen Stacy to the alien costume; from the Green Goblin to the Punisher and Venom, it's all here. The spectacular art, never before presented in a collection of this sort, has been painstakingly recolored for The SPIDER-MAN 30TH ANNIVERSARY POSTER MAGAZINE, a celebration of a character that has changed the face of comics forever.
BYRNE

ITEM! When Fish City is threatened by the criminal mastermind, Hook, and his evil organization, **S.Q.U.I.D.**, the Chief of the Fish Police knows there's only one man tough enough to handle the job — Inspector Gill. is the plot behind the **FISH POLICE**, a brand new monthly from Marvel re-presenting the cult classic comic that inspired the prime-time animated TV series. **FISH POLICE** writer/artist/creator Steve Moncuse brings his hilarious undersea world to Marvel, In full color, starting with the four part saga, "Hairballs."

Told by his wicked wizard advisor that Inspector Gill possesses unusual mystical energies, the conniving Hook hatches a plan to corrupt the aquatic cop and turn him into the sergeant-of-the-guard of his deadly armored-prawn army. Using as bait a mysterious drug called, "Hairballs," Hook's sexy spy, the scheming Angelfish, lures the unsuspecting Inspector into their deadly net by telling him that the drug opens the door to another world where people walk with *legs* instead of fins. Kidnapping the chief's secretary, the gorgeous Goldie, and seducing Gill with promises of wealth and women, Hook's plan to reel Gill into his diabolical world of crime seems almost certain to succeed.

With a supporting cast that includes Oscar the Octopus, Dr. Calamari and Blophish the butler, Moncuse's tongue-firmly-in-cheek brand of humor is a refreshing change for anyone who appreciates a good fish story.

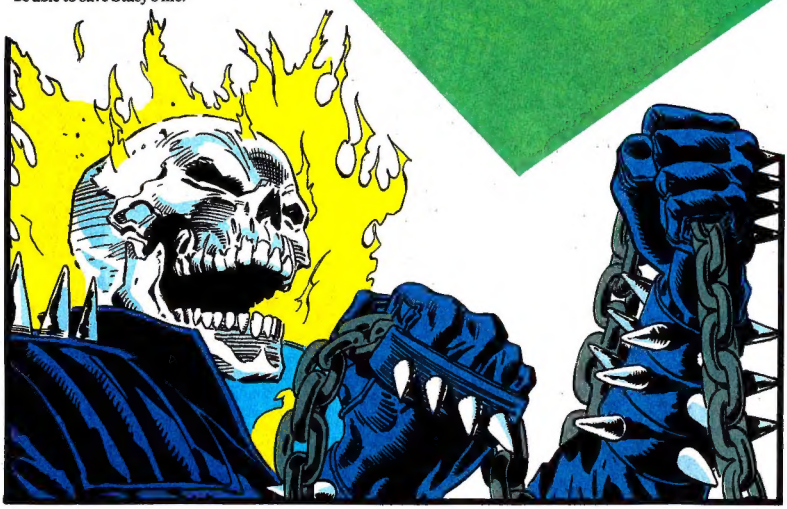


FISH POLICE: TM & © 1992 Steve Moncuse. All rights reserved.

ITEM! When the maniacal Scarecrow goes on a bloody killing spree, only the Spirit of Vengeance can stop him in "Fear", the new Ghost Rider bookshelf format comic written by Flame-Head's author Howard Mackie and penciled by **DAREDEVIL's** Lee Weeks. This 48 page October release offers the unlikely teaming of Ghost Rider and Captain America to battle the menace of a new and improved Scarecrow.

Seeking revenge on Captain America, the mysteriously resurrected Scarecrow begins randomly butchering innocent people to lure the Sentinel of Liberty into a trap. But, as the unwary Scarecrow soon learns, when innocent blood is spilled, the Spirit of Vengeance soon arrives to see that justice is served. Taking Stacy Dolan (Dan Ketch's girlfriend) hostage, the Scarecrow finds himself battling both Captain America and the Ghost Rider.

Faced with the inhuman strength and bloodthirsty ferocity of this new Scarecrow, even Ghosty and Cap may not be able to save Stacy's life.



ITEM! Marvel Comics is proud to present **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #1.** Not a new title, but a special **MARVEL MILESTONE** edition commemorating a series that has been one of Marvel's most popular for the last 30 years.

MARVEL MILESTONE reprints are more than just ordinary re-presentaions of old stories. The entire book, including the original advertisements, is recolored and restored, then printed on glossy, high-grade "miraweb" paper. The most difficult and time consuming part of this reprint wasn't the restoration of the classic Stan Lee and Steve Ditko story, but the restoration of the advertisements.

When a comic book is made, all original art boards are shot on film to preserve them for future use. The advertisements, however, are not included. To include the ads in the reprint, the original comic book must be "scanned" into a computer — the process by which the computer analyzes a picture and transforms it into a computer generated image which can be printed. This has been done successfully for past **MILESTONE** editions.

Due to the decay of the old issues and the fact that scanning is a less than perfect science, the process of making the book look as good as new isn't easy. "Nobody has ever really done this kind of scanning before," said Editor Rob Tokar. "It couldn't be done normally; it had to be very precise. Lucky for us though the computer guy in charge of the scanning is a Marvel fan and has been putting in a lot of extra effort."

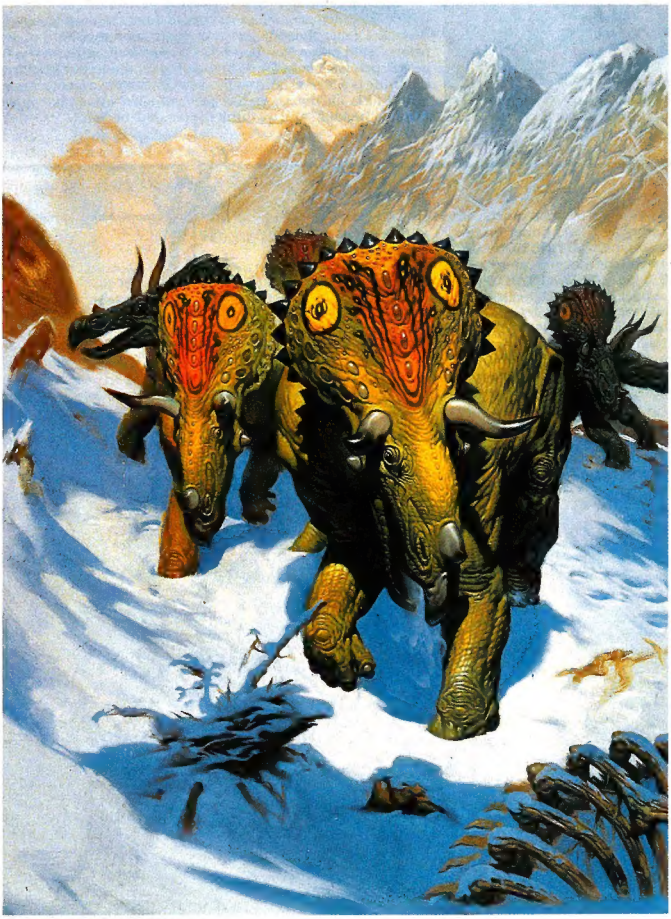
Rob feels all the effort has paid off. "We're very happy with the results," he said, "and we think the fans will be, too."

ITEM! "It's 224 pages of way cool art, in a rad package with a ballistic storyline!" said Editor Suzanne Gaffney about her latest project, the **X-TINCTION AGENDA** trade paperback reprinting the nine part crossover that took place in **UNCANNY X-MEN, NEW MUTANTS** and **X-FACTOR.** The trade paperback's Chris Claremont story is highlighted with art by Jim Lee and Rob Leifeld.

When the X-Men learn of the enslavement of mutants by the island nation, Genosha, they quickly find themselves embroiled in the affairs of the mutant-hating government, targets of their demented prejudice. Attacked by high-tech storm troopers led by the insane cyborg, Cameron Hodge, the mutants use all of their skills and training to battle this evil army. At the same time, they must face the death of a close comrade. **THE X-TINCTION AGENDA** re-presents an adventure that has been one of the most pivotal in recent mutant history.

— Matt Morra

DINO



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SAURS

A CELEBRATION

This is a series that's been 205 million years in the making.

It was 205 million years ago that the first dinosaurs ascended to the top of the ecological hierarchy thanks, largely, to a global catastrophe that destroyed the vast majority of life on Earth. Survivors of this disaster, they arose, phoenix-like, to a position of dominance over the competing mammals, driving our furry ancestors into a Dark Age that lasted 140 million years.

While we petty mammals scurried about their feet, the dinosaurs bestrode the Earth and reigned supreme. Then, 65 million years ago, and in an ironic twist of fate, another global disaster drove the dinosaurs to extinction. The time had come for our diminutive predecessors to take center stage and evolve into horses and elephants, rabbits and rhinos, bats and. . .of course. . .men. The dinosaurs were lost from sight and forgotten until the middle of the nineteenth century.

In 1841, based on a few fragmentary bones, British scientist Sir Richard Owen announced to the world that our planet had once been inhabited by a race of huge reptiles he called the "dinosaurs" — Greek for "Terrible Lizard."

Immediately, our love affair with these marvelous creatures began in earnest. In North America their bones were so common that a shepherd built his home from them. Bone collectors struggled to extract them from a ravine, while on the other side of the hill, Custer and his men learned it didn't pay to mess with the Sioux nation. Charles Dickens imagined them sloshing through England's industrial wastelands in his novel *Hard Times*. Our knowledge of the dinosaurs exploded and they soon penetrated their way into the home of Joe Public.

Duvet covers, shampoo containers, ice lollies, soft toys, sportswear: all featured Brontosaurus, Triceratops, Stegosaurus and, lest we forget, Tyrannosaurus. Sadly, things turned sour for the dinosaurs. They became synonymous with all things dull, stupid and slow. The public image of these wondrous saurians became one of dim-witted, cold-blooded giants wading through murky swamps eating pondweed (rather than scantily-clad cavewomen).

Science and Hollywood did nothing to quell the myth. Tomak the Brave could always rely on his mighty thews

and mightier brain to dispatch even the most awesome stop-motion Tyrannosaur. The image remained largely unchanged until the late 1960s, and it's at this point in time that the real story of **DINOSAURS: THE CELEBRATION** begins.

In 1968, at the age of four, I asked my Dad what these strange creatures were in the back of one of his animal books. "They're dinosaurs" he said. Sadly, he told me they were no longer around. I was disgusted, extinction being a fairly tough concept for any four-year old to grasp. Still, undeterred and the budding artist that I was, I put pencil to paper and spent days copying them, parrot-fashion. The days became weeks, the weeks turned into years. Like generations of youngsters, I mastered the verbal intricacies of Pachycephalosaurus, Parasaurolophus and Opithoccelocaudia even before I learnt my alphabet. However, while my passion for dinosaurs never died, it did settle into the general consensus of opinion held at the time, and my fervor waned.

It looked like I would develop into a healthy teenager, interested in girls and cars and the like, but fate conspired against me. In the late '60s, some new ideas about dinosaurs arose that, by the late '70s, snowballed into a full-scale renaissance. The new train of thought held that they were no longer cold-blooded, dumb lizards, but were bright, active, warm-blooded animals with closer affinities to a crow than a tortoise.

Going totally against the grain, proponents of these new ideas were considered scientific heretics, fit for burning on the mammal-biased stake. As far as I was concerned, this is what the dinosaurs were waiting for, and my interest passed passion on the way to full-blown obsession.

I moved my flag into the camps of the revolutionaries, hoping the rest of Humanity would follow. Despair. Books still produced by ham-fisted publishers continued to shed a poor light on the dinosaurs. They remained bogged down in the swamps, too brainless to escape. I had to do something.

Three years ago, I got my chance.

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While I was attending a day course on dinosaurs, the lecturer, Paleontologist Mike Howgate, mentioned that 1991 was the 150th year since Owen had published his paper on the Dinosauria. There would be celebrations, museum exhibitions, postage stamps.

Aha! The time had come. . .but what to do? And how to do it?

Obviously, it should involve comic strips. After all, comics and dinosaurs seemed to have been made for each other. The format was thrashed out after hours of deep thought, endless discussion and a great deal of time spent pawing over numerous wildlife videos (such as Sir David Attenborough's *The Trials Of Life*, which provided invaluable inspiration).

Month's later, a proposal was ready. This is where things got devious. I knew exactly the right two people to pitch the series at; Carl Potts and

DINOSAURS: TM & © 1992 Epic Comics. All rights reserved.

the late Carol Kalish. I'd known Carl for a couple of years and knew he shared my fondness for dinosaurs. He was also, conveniently, Epic Executive Editor. Carol, meanwhile, was a qualified paleontologist as well as being Marvel's specialty sales manager. Naturally, she loved the idea. Both went to bat for the project.

It was however, far from easy to get things on the road.

Eighteen months, numerous format changes and the 150th birthday passed by. It looked like the series would blow up on the launch pad. I gave up hope of ever seeing my baby grow to fruition and settled, instead, for co-writing and colouring *DREADLANDS*, another Epic project and a time-travel story set during the age of the dinosaurs. Then, one day, out of left field, came a call from Carl.

"We have lift off!" My yell of exultation shook the dust off the roof of Marvel UK's Arundel Street office. *DINOSAURS: A CELEBRATION* had been born; a four-issue series featuring text articles on all the major dinosaur families, richly illustrated and using state-of-the-art scientific information provided by Mike Howgate, who came on board as consultant. These would be complemented by six-page comic strips dramatizing the trials and tribulations the dinosaurs underwent during their everyday struggle for survival: a mother training her pups to hunt, a herd undergoing a harrowing river cross - ing, forest fires and sandstorms to battle, and the constant war between hunter and hunted.

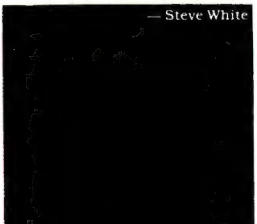
The comic creators' love of dinosaurs meant that I had little trouble in assembling an impressive list of comic talent, one that ended up almost entirely British — a fact that concerned me. It was Carl, however, who remarked that it was a Brit who named the dinosaurs, so that it seemed only fitting to have a creative team from the UK.

The creative line-up includes Dan Abnett, currently writing *DEATH'S HEAD II*, *THE KNIGHTS OF PENDRAGON* and *THE PUNISHER*, which he co-writes with Andy Lanning. Andy joined *DINOSAURS: A CELEBRATION* to flex his artistic muscles in producing a beautiful strip for the series. Other familiar contributors include Nick Vince (**CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER, NIGHTBREED, WARHEADS**) and Graham Marks' (**MOTORMOUTH**). Wonderfully-painted artwork came from the likes of John Bolton, John Higgins (who is working on **MUTATIS** for Epic with — hey! — Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning!), Kev Hopgood (**IRON MAN**), Dermot Power (**DIGITEK**) and Phil Gascoine (**DREADLANDS, PENDRAGON**). There were others, like painter John Watkiss and science fiction artist Chris Foss who said 'Yeah, I'd love to. You know, I used to love dinosaurs when I was young. . .'

I guess that's what **DINOSAURS:**

They remained bogged down in the swamps, too brainless to escape. I had to do something.

A CELEBRATION is about; drumming up the childish awe that dinosaurs generate in so many of us, and showing them in their true light. Not cumbersome slobs, poorly adapted to their environment, destined to gather dust in a museum hall, but living, breathing, fighting, mating, sleeping, snorting, bellowing, active, gregarious, wondrous, spectacular animals who ruled this planet for more time than any snobbish, bipedal mammal could possibly imagine.



A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

this SPIDER-MAN special edition is NOT for sale!

SPIDER-MAN: THE TRIAL OF VENOM
Features...
- ▶ 32 spectacular pages!
- ▶ an extra-heavy cover with metallic ink!
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But...it can be yours by simply sending in the coupon below with a donation of at least $5.00 to the U.S. Committee for UNICEF.

Marvel Comics has joined the U.S. Committee for UNICEF in announcing this *very* special edition of Spider-Man: The Trial of Venom with proceeds going directly to the U.S. Committee for UNICEF—the United Nations Children's Fund.

Already this Spider-Man special edition is hot...and the offer is limited. So order now! In fact, order as many copies as you wish as long as each order is accompanied by a separate coupon* or a facsimile and a donation of at least $5.00. And remember...for every donation you make, you'll be helping needy children throughout the world.

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Conceal cash contributions within a folded piece of paper. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

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Tom TALKS

We all know that. . .with great power there must also come. . .great responsibility! The budding writers among you should certainly be aware of an even greater truth: with great motivation there may also come. . .a great character!

Motivation is the most important element which goes into the crafting of any character. . .and the operative word is *any!* A character without a clearly defined motivation isn't really a character, s/he's only a prop. A piece of scenery. Props and scenery may add a certain richness to a story, but no reader really cares what happens to them.

"Not true," certain among you shout. What about such props as Thor's mighty hammer and Captain America's invincible shield. The readers are deeply concerned whenever these particular props are threatened. I say that's only because we sympathize with Captain America or Thor. Captain America's shield is only important because of the way it relates to Cap. Otherwise, it's just another hunk of indestructible metal.

And while we may enjoy stories set in the Savage Land, the reactions of the characters we've dropped into this wondrous environment are usually of far greater interest to the reader than the unique geographical location. We read stories to learn about *people.*

To really appreciate a character, we must know what s/he wants out of life.

What is s/he trying to accomplish? Why?!

What drives this character to do the things s/he is doing?

How do you establish the motivation of a character? Well, let's take a quick look at the origin of a certain friendly neighborhood web-swinger. . .

Teenager has been raised by aunt and uncle. Gets bitten by a radioactive spider. Gains spiderlike abilities. Exploits newly acquired powers. Fails to stop a burglar. Uncle later killed by same burglar. Teenager captures burglar.

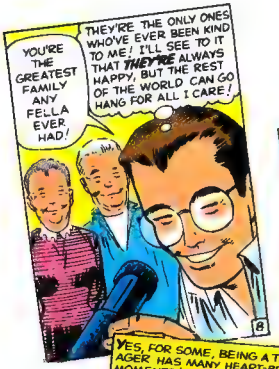
Reduced to mere actions, this doesn't sound all that interesting.

It isn't. . .

. . .Unless we know the motivations behind the actions.

Teenager has been raised by aunt and uncle. Though his home life is filled with love and support, his social life is in the shade. A hard working, responsible student, he is admired by his teachers. But, shy and introverted, he is ridiculed by his classmates.

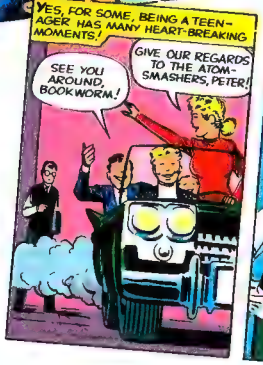
Gets bitten by a radioactive spider. Gains spiderlike abilities.

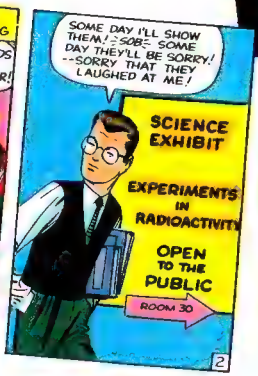

YOU'RE THE GREATEST FAMILY ANY FELLA EVER HAD!
THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO'VE EVER BEEN KIND TO ME! I'LL SEE TO IT THAT THEY'RE ALWAYS HAPPY, BUT THE REST OF THE WORLD CAN GO HANG FOR ALL I CARE!
8

Left: Teenager has been raised by aunt and uncle. Though his home life is filled with love and support...

Below: ... his social life is in the shade.

Right: Gets bitten by radioactive spider. Gains spiderlike abilities.


YES, FOR SOME, BEING A TEENAGER HAS MANY HEART-BREAKING MOMENTS!
GIVE OUR REGARDS TO THE ATOM-SMASHERS, PETER!
SEE YOU AROUND, BOOKWORM!


SOME DAY I'LL SHOW THEM! SOB! SOME DAY THEY'LL BE SORRY! --SORRY THAT THEY LAUGHED AT ME!
SCIENCE EXHIBIT
EXPERIMENTS IN RADIOACTIVITY
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
ROOM 30
2

Exploits newly acquired powers. He turns to show business. Why? He has something to prove to all of the people who ever laughed at him because he was a bookworm. He'd also like to earn some money to help repay his aunt and uncle for all they've done for him.

Fails to stop a burglar. Does he try his best to stop this guy? Does he act heroically, but fail to stop some trickery on the villain's part? Nope. He merely lets the man run past him. Why? It wasn't his job to stop burglars. He's through being pushed around. He's only looking out for number one now. In other words, he's tired of being a hard working, responsible bookworm.

Uncle later killed by same burglar.

Teenager captures burglar.

Teenager realizes that he made a serious mistake. He should have captured that burglar. He would have caught him if he had only acted in a more responsible manner. His uncle would still be alive, if he had only reacted as a simple hard working, responsible student, instead of a self-ish celebrity.

He learns that with great power there must also come. . .great responsibility.

See what happens when you add a little motivation?

A lot of readers believe that Spider-Man is motivated by guilt. We know better. If he was strictly motivated by guilt, we'd ultimately have a very dull character. He's already failed to save his uncle. He can't ever go back (unless he stars in an issue of WHAT IF —?, but let's not get into that now!).

All the character could ever do is feel guilty!

Boring!

On the other hand, responsibility is a great motivation. Like all of us, Peter Parker is in an unending struggle to act responsibly. He is constantly torn in numerous directions. He has responsibilities to his wife, his aunt, his job and humanity at large. Sometimes these responsibilities are in direct opposition to each other, forcing him to make hard, painful decisions.

In other words, his basic motivation provides his writers with countless springboards for stories. Some can be subtle, others quite blatant, but there is a wealth of possibilities for a fertile imagination. That's a large part of what makes Spider-Man one of the richest characters of all.

Some people tell me that all of the good motivations have already been done. There's nothing new that they can contribute.

They're probably right.

They have nothing to contribute.

Do you?

It requires some serious imagination, courage and insight into the human psyche. Creating new characters isn't easy. If it was, anybody could do it. We wouldn't need talented people. . .like you!

Thanks for being there!

AND, A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY...
MY FAULT--ALL MY FAULT! IF ONLY I HAD STOPPED HIM WHEN I COULD HAVE! BUT I DIDN'T--AND NOW --UNCLE BEN-- IS DEAD...
AND A LEAN, SILENT FIGURE SLOWLY FADES INTO THE GATHERING DARKNESS, AWARE AT LAST THAT IN THIS WORLD, WITH GREAT POWER THERE MUST ALSO COME--GREAT RESPONSIBILITY!
AND SO A LEGEND IS BORN AND A NEW NAME IS ADDED TO THE ROSTER OF THOSE WHO MAKE THE WORLD OF FANTASY THE MOST EXCITING REALM OF ALL! END.
SO, THEY LAUGHED AT ME FOR BEING A BOOKWORM, EH? WELL, ONLY A SCIENCE MAJOR COULD HAVE CREATED A DEVICE LIKE THIS!

Left: He has something to prove to all of the people who ever laughed at him because he was a bookworm.

Above: Teenager realizes that he made a serious mistake.
If he had only reacted as a simple hard-working, responsible student, instead of a selfish celebrity.

— Tom De Falco

THIS MAN

It had been a long and tiring convention. The last stragglers had gone, the last comics were signed, the last questions posed about what was coming up in **INCREDIBLE HULK.**

In the near-deserted convention space, I packed up the last of the black-and-white photo copies of **HULK #400.** My mind was still whirling. My day was not over. For, with all the recent conventions I had been doing, the deadlines had slipped past. The next issue was late. A plot was waiting to be developed.

And then I heard, before I saw, the fan boy.

He stood in front of the table. I had spotted him from time to time during the convention,

THIS WRITER

THE STARTLING TRUTH

but unlike the other fans, he carried no books to sign. He didn't ask me if Betty and Bruce are going to get back together, or if someone is going to in X-FACTOR. He just hovered, apparently wanting to ask something, but never getting up the nerve to come close and ask.

Now, though, with the autographs signed and the crowds gone, he was right there, not a foot away, clearing his throat. I looked up at him, my eyebrows raised questioningly. **"Yeah?"**

He took a breath and asked one of the most common questions I ever get: **"Where do you get your ideas?"**

But he asked it in a way that was different from all the others. Usually, it's out of idle curiosity, or a general wide-eyed wonderment at the way the creative process works.

But this kid — tall, gawky, glasses perched on the end of his nose — he. . .

He needed to know.

I closed my briefcase with a loud ***"SNAP,"*** spun the locking combo, and said, "What's your name?"

"Vic."

"Come with me, Vic."

He followed me, puppy-dog like, into the elevator that led to the parking garage. There seemed to be no one else about. The sounds of our shoes on the oil-stained concrete ***REVERBERATED*** through the structure.

Vic was clearly puzzled. He started to ask a question and I glanced in his direction. . .and that was when I saw the sudden movement behind a pole.

"Down!" I shouted. He didn't understand but instantly obeyed, falling to the grimy floor and thus avoiding the bullet that ***WHIZZED*** over his head and ***SHATTERED*** the windshield of a '73 Corvette. I pulled my Mauser from its usual place of concealment in my right sock and ***FIRED*** off a couple of rounds before yanking at Vic's arm. "Come on," I said. "If you die now, you won't have a chance to read FUTURE IMPERFECT when it comes out."

Uncomprehending, he followed me as we made our way across the garage, scooting in-between and under parked cars as bullets continued to ***RICOCHET*** all around us.

"Who's shooting at you?" he asked, trying not to sound hysterical.

"Who do you think?" I replied, crouching low.

"Uh. . .gangster? You, uh, you witnessed a crime and they want to make sure you don't testify?"

"That's a little cliched. Try again."

"Uh. . .jealous husband?"

"Too trite."

"Uhm. . ." His eyes darted frantically. "They're from the future, and they're trying to kill you because you're going to become a powerful and influential person?"

I thought about that a moment. "Too X-MEN," I decided.

"Maybe. . .I dunno. . .maybe you're a spy?"

He studied me. Balding, heavy, glasses. "No. Not at all. I mean. . .everyone knows spies are dashing, like Harrison Ford or Alec Baldwin or Timothy Dalton. You as a spy. . .it's completely against type."

"Okay," I replied. "Now we're rolling. Always avoid the obvious. Also, always avoid bullets." A rearview mirror above our head ***SHATTERED.*** Glass ***RAINED DOWN*** on us.

I grabbed his shoulder and there, about ten feet away, was an exit door. But it was ten feet of us being targets. We had to try for it, though.

We moved as I ***FIRED*** my Mauser over my shoulder, trying to lay down covering fire. For a fleeting moment, I thought we were going to make it. Then the door ***FLEW*** open just as my hand reached for it. A man was standing there, wearing a long, black raincoat, a black hat pulled down low, and sunglasses. I saw him ***SWING UP*** a machine pistol, but I was just a hair faster as I squeezed the trigger on my mauser.

The hammer ***SLAMMED*** onto an empty chamber. I was out of ammo.

Black Raincoat smiled. He waved the muzzle, indicating that Vic and I should step back. We had no choice.

Black Raincoat's associate, who'd been keeping us pinned down, now stepped into view behind us. He wore a pullover sweater and sneakers, and looked uncomfortably like Mister Rogers. Vic gaped. "He doesn't look like a spy either."

> "You've *got* to start reading something other than comic books."

"Get used to it, I said. "In the real world, nothing is clear cut. Everything is shades of gray. That's what you should try and put across when you write a story."

"Enough gabbing," said Black Raincoat, taking aim with his machine pistol.

Vic swallowed nervously. "What about when your hero is in a hopeless situation."

"Fortunately," I said calmly, **"when you're the writer, you control the world.** If you need an outrageous save, you can pull it off, if you're slick enough."

Suddenly an ***ENGINE ROARED*** to life, and the parking garage was ***FLOODED*** with illumination ***BLAZING*** from headlights. Pullover Sweater whirled just in time to see the massive front of an RV ***BEARING*** down on him. He froze there, a deer paralyzed by oncoming headlights, then ***VANISHED*** beneath the huge vehicle's bumper.

Black Raincoat had slightly more presence of mind. He swung his machine pistol away from us and ***FIRED*** at the van as I ***LUNGED*** to the side, pulling the shocked Vic with me. The bullets struck the smoked windshield of the van and ***RICOCHETED*** away harmlessly. Well. . .not completely harmlessly. One of them bounced back and struck Black Raincoat square between the eyes. He went down without a word, which was considerate since I couldn't think of anything he could say that would interest me.

"This is like the RV that the gray Hulk used to travel around in," Vic realized.

"I know. He didn't need it anymore."

The door ***FLEW*** open and we ***LEAPED*** in. A tall guy with blondish hair was at the wheel. Riding shotgun was a guy who was more muscled, and had black hair and a beard.

"What the hell kept you, Dale?" I demanded as the door slammed shut behind us.

The blond guy pointed at the bearded one. "George read the directions wrong."

Vic looked from one to the other. "You're Dale Keen! And George Perez!"

"That's Keown. Pronounced KEE-own," Dale corrected him.

"And Perez has the accent on the first 'e,'" said George. He had a drawing board balanced on his lap, and was inking a page.

Dale backed up the RV and moments later we were rolling out onto the darkened streets of Manhattan. Vic was staring over George's shoulder. **Who's the old man?"** he asked, looking at the illustration George was finishing.

George didn't even glance up. **"Rick Jones."**

"Rick Jones? He looks like he's 100!"

"More," said George.

I glanced at the page. "That's from the second issue of FUTURE IMPERFECT. Shouldn't you be done with that?"

"It'll be finished, don't worry," said George.

"What's FUTURE IMPERFECT?" asked Vic.

"Story involving the future of the Hulk," George replied tersely. "He's become the ultimate power of the world. Peter wrote it, I'm doing the art. Now let me finish this up. I've still got to get to a community theater rehearsal tonight." He looked up at me. "I'm doing 'Jud Fry' in 'Oklahoma.'"

"You'll be great."

Vic looked at me. "Where did you get the idea?"

"For the future Hulk story? From the world. Here. Look." I tossed him a newspaper. The headline was about a South American dictator trampling human rights. **"This man,"** and I tapped the picture, **"has power. Great power."**

"And with great power," said Vic proudly, **"comes great responsibility."**

Dale laughed. George said nothing.

"You read anything besides comic books?" I asked.

"Well. . .no."

"Yeah. Well, try reading something else. Like the work of Lord Acton, who said, 'Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'"

"But the Hulk is a good guy!"

"Life isn't always as simple as good and bad, and neither is the Hulk. It's like I said before, if you study life, history, people. . .you never run out of ideas. Look. . .you try it. Look out at the street. What do you see?"

He looked out as we cruised by one of the scuzzier sections of town. Derelicts were slumped against burned-out buildings.

"Tell me a story," I said.

Dale had put the RV on autopilot to free up his hands and was quickly making sketches to use for reference in possible future stories.

"About them? They're just. . .just homeless guys. What's their story?" Vic was confused.

"Okay. Start with 'What If. . .' What if that guy there," and I pointed to one unconscious man, "was a former head of a Fortune 500 company?"

"Huh? But. . .but how did he wind up in the gutter?"

"You tell me."

Vic thought about it. And then he started to tell me a long,

HELP? I NEED HELP! WHERE AM I? WHO'S THERE?
THESE LOOSEN, MAN.
ALL MIN
I'M GLAD YOU ASKED
YOU ALWAYS USE YOUR POWER BY POINTING. MIGHT BE WORTH RIPPING YOUR ARMS OFF TO SEE IF THAT STOPS YOU.

involved epic involving betrayal, sex, jealousy, and an insurance salesman. "Sounds promising," I said. "You see. . .that's the opposite of the Hulk story I was describing earlier. Someone who had absolute power and went to having nothing."

"Where do you go from there? With the story?"

"A variety of possibilities. You could have it end tragically, like a Thomas Hardy novel. Or he could overcome the weaknesses that brought him to this point and redeem himself. Or he could go off the deep end and decide to avenge himself on the people he blames for bringing him down. Or you could even make him a minor character in some larger story. . .give him all this backstory so that what happens to him has some meaning."

"Like. . ." said Vic, "like if there was a guy who was going around murdering homeless people?"

Suddenly we heard a ***SCREAM.*** A darkly clad individual had come out of the shadows, grabbed the derelict by the back of his jacket, and was wrapping a garrote around the unfortunate man's neck.

"Jeez!" shouted Vic.

The RV ***SLAMMED TO A HALT*** and Dale leaped towards the door, drawing pad under his arm. "My turn, my turn!" he shouted and jumped out of the RV. George, on a tight deadline, kept on inking.

The would-be murderer saw Dale coming. Dropping his intended victim, he ***SPUN*** towards Dale and drew a gun.

Dale drew a gun faster.

In half a second his pencil had passed over the pad, a blur, and there was a really nice .357 magnum now on the paper. Dale aimed and ***FIRED.*** Slammed in the chest, the dark man hurtled back. His coat fell away. He was huge, massively built, with red skin, pointed ears and three eyes.

I looked at Vic.

"You've *got* to start reading something other than comic books," I told him.

The monster started forward, and suddenly a massive green arm extended from the alleyway. The derelict watched, petrified, as the immense green fist closed around the monster's head. A familiar voice grumbled from the darkness of the alleyway, "Get back in the RV, David. I'll handle this." And, with a shriek of protest, the monster was yanked into the alleyway, out of our sight, into the shadows. Though we could see nothing, we heard the satisfying sounds of the creature being ***PUMMELED*** into unconsciousness.

Dale displayed the finished artwork to Vic proudly. There was a familiar green-skinned figure, stuffing the insensate monster into a garbage can. "What do you think?"" he asked.

"N-nice," said Vic numbly.

We cruised the city until daylight and dropped Vic off in front of his Soho apartment. He looked up at us.

"So ideas are everywhere," he said.

"Right. You just have to think a little."

As we pulled away, Vic started into his apartment building. I was pleased to see trucks pulling up. Terrorists were clearly about to attack him.

"Should we do anything?" asked Dale from the wheel.

"Nah," I said. "He should be able to handle this just fine on his own."

While the van picked up speed, I watched in the rearview mirror. . .

And was dismayed to see a massive foot, 300 stories tall, descend from the heavens and step on the terrorists trucks, ***CRUSHING THEM*** into oblivion.

I sighed.

"COMIC BOOK FANS. WHATTAYA GONNA DO?"

We drove away into the dawn.

— Peter David

Hot Sheet

Ah, September. A time for change — Summer into Autumn, shorts to pants, vacation-time to school-days. School!?! Now that's a depressing thought. Don't get me wrong: I'm a big proponent of better living through higher education. But during the school year, you spend a lot of time doing things on other people's schedules. You have to find something to break the stride. And that something is comic books. This "Hot Sheet," we offer you the quick-hit list — comics guaranteed to fill your time with fun (but if you don't watch out, you might end up learning a thing or two. . .).

Since this column will be about diversions, it's only appropriate to begin with a comic book which one day will be remembered as one of the funniest and most enjoyable reads ever, Len Kaminski and James Fry's **SLAPSTICK**. A comedy? you say. You betcha'! But a comedy with a twist.

Slapstick, you see, lives in the Marvel Universe, right along with the somber Doctor Strange, the intellectual and awesome Hulk, and the original punster himself, Spidey! Marvel Bullpenner Steve Bunche, no stranger to the wacky side of life, was jealous when he saw just a tad of what Slapstick can do. "It's probably the ultimate super-power — to become a 'toon. We've all seen how deadly *Bugs Bunny* can be, so we can only guess at what this guy can do. And with Len (**IRON MAN**, **MORBIUS**) Kaminski as writer, it can only be a sure winner."

Retailer Brian Schur of *Cosmic Comics*, commented (in between belly-laughs) on the historical turning point **SLAPSTICK** represents. "**SLAPSTICK** reminds me of the simpler days of comics in the 60's, very Ditko-ish, very funny. It might prove to be a sleeper hit!" Marvel Editor Terry Kavanagh, whose **EXCALIBUR** series brought the "ha ha" back to comics while still keeping its superhero edge, hit the 'toon on the head when he summed up his feelings on this monumental limited series. "**SLAPSTICK** is a project that Len and James have been working on for years — and it shows. A radical departure from Marvel's main line, I'm expecting it to be a runaway success — with more to follow!"

All jokes aside, September will see the most significant release in recent Marvel history, **SPIDER-MAN 2099**. This all new series is the launch for Marvel's new 2099 line of books — titles which will take a look at what becomes of today's Marvel Universe. Editor Joey Cavalieri has put together a bold concept that promises to push the boundaries of comic entertainment. **SPIDER-MAN 2099** is sure to capture the attention and imagination of the entirety of comicdom. "Hot Sheet" caught up with Danny Fingeroth, editor of the "present-day" **SPIDER-MAN** titles to get his opinion on the project. "I'm really intrigued by this character," pondered Fingeroth, "and I'm curious to see how he's the same as and how he's different from our [present-day] Spidey. Really, I'm excited about the whole 2099 concept in general. It's going to be one of the biggest things to come out of Marvel in years."

The announcement of the creative team for **SPIDER-MAN 2099** — writer Peter David, penciler Rick Leonardi, and inker Al Williamson — garnered no little excitement, as if the project needed a bigger push. "The idea was interesting enough all by itself," points out Buddy Saunders along with *Lone Star Comics* employees Craig Miller and Chris Gomez, "but

Slapstick

when you combine that with some of comics' top talents you have the potential for a blockbuster." Gary Colabuono, who was lucky enough to see some advanced pages from the first issue, was intrigued by the look of **SPIDER-MAN 2099**. "The costume is a nifty, balanced blend of Spidey's 20th Century look, plus hints of Carnage, Venom, the Punisher, and a trace of cyberpunk. In other words, it's great! The story is by one of contemporary comics' most intelligent writers, Peter David. His vision of the future in tandem with artists Rick Leonardi and Al Williamson should create a lot of interest in this series."

From the future of the Marvel Universe, to Earth's distant past, the original "House of Ideas" has it all, as proved by **DINOSAURS: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY**, a four-issue bookshelf series that takes us all the way back to our world's most exciting prehistoric time. **MARVEL AGE** editor, the studious Steve Saffel, insisted that I take a look at this proj - ect (as if anyone could keep me away from a book about one of my favorite subjects). "**DINOSAURS** is going to be one of the most breathtaking projects ever produced in comic book format," gleams Steve. "The drama of pre-history proves that truth is often more astounding than fiction, and the brilliantly painted artwork by such talents as John Bolton (**HELLRAISER**), Dermot Power (**DIGITEK**), John Higgins (**MUTATIS**), Chris Foss and John Watkiss makes this the amateur paleontologist's dream series. And what kid, of any age, isn't an amateur paleontologist?"

People from all around the comic industry are excited about this historical undertaking for a variety of reasons. Shelton Drum of *Heroes Aren't Hard To Find* awaits this project with great anticipation. "Everybody under four-feet tall (and quite a few of us over) likes dinosaurs. Young and old alike will be eager to get their claws on this title, and teachers can use this for educational/entertainment purposes in the classroom." Steve Gursky of *Steve's Comic Relief* echoes these sentiments. "**DINOSAURS** picks up on one of every child's fascinations: pre-historic creatures. We all had models, plastic toys and puzzles, and we all went to the museum to see these awesome creatures. And then most of us forgot them. Marvel is prodding our memory with fantastic art. . . I can't wait to read this with my kids."

Now, seeing as we're on the subject of history, it's only appropriate to take a look at how Marvel is dealing with some recent events that have changed our world and will shape the future. One project, set in the recently defunct Soviet Union, gives us insight as to the way the Marvel Universe evolves right alongside the real universe. **THE SOVIET SUPER SOLDIERS SPECIAL** will peel back the Iron Curtain one last time as the floundering super-power attempts to rebuild its declining military/industrial complex through extraordinary means. The intriguing storyline and stellar creative team have people buzzing about this retrospective project. "Fabian (**NEW WARRIORS**) Nicieza teams up with artists Angel (**WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH**) Medina and Javier (**GHOST RIDER**) Saltares on a topical super hero book set in the former Soviet Union," points out Shelton Drum

with anticipation. "Fans can look forward to the return of some of their favorite Cold War villains in this sure-fire hot hit." Buddy Saunders also likes the potential of this book. "We [the *Lone Star Comics* staff] like what we see on the **SOVIET SUPER SOLDIERS SPECIAL. . . Medina and Saltares are both good artists. The Medina pages we've seen look great, better even than his WARLOCK** art."

And finally, class, there is one more history lesson before final exams — a lesson in Marvel's history, that is. This Fall, expect not one, but four fantastic looks at Marvel's past as new **SPIDER-MAN**, FANTASTIC FOUR, **IRON MAN** and **DOCTOR STRANGE MASTERWORKS** make their way to comic shop shelves. **MASTERWORKS** editions are always welcome additions to anyone's library; they re-present the best of Marvel in high quality hardcover volumes packaged for those who want to read the stories that launched the careers of their favorite heroes. Quite a few of Marvel's editors look forward to the latest **MASTERWORKS**. **PUNISHER** editor Don Daley quips, "Call me a fan geek," [all right Don, you're a fan geek], "but I'm genuinely excited about seeing the ten-issue John Romita, Sr. Spidey run in **MASTERWORKS** [that's **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #41-#50** for those of you keeping score]."

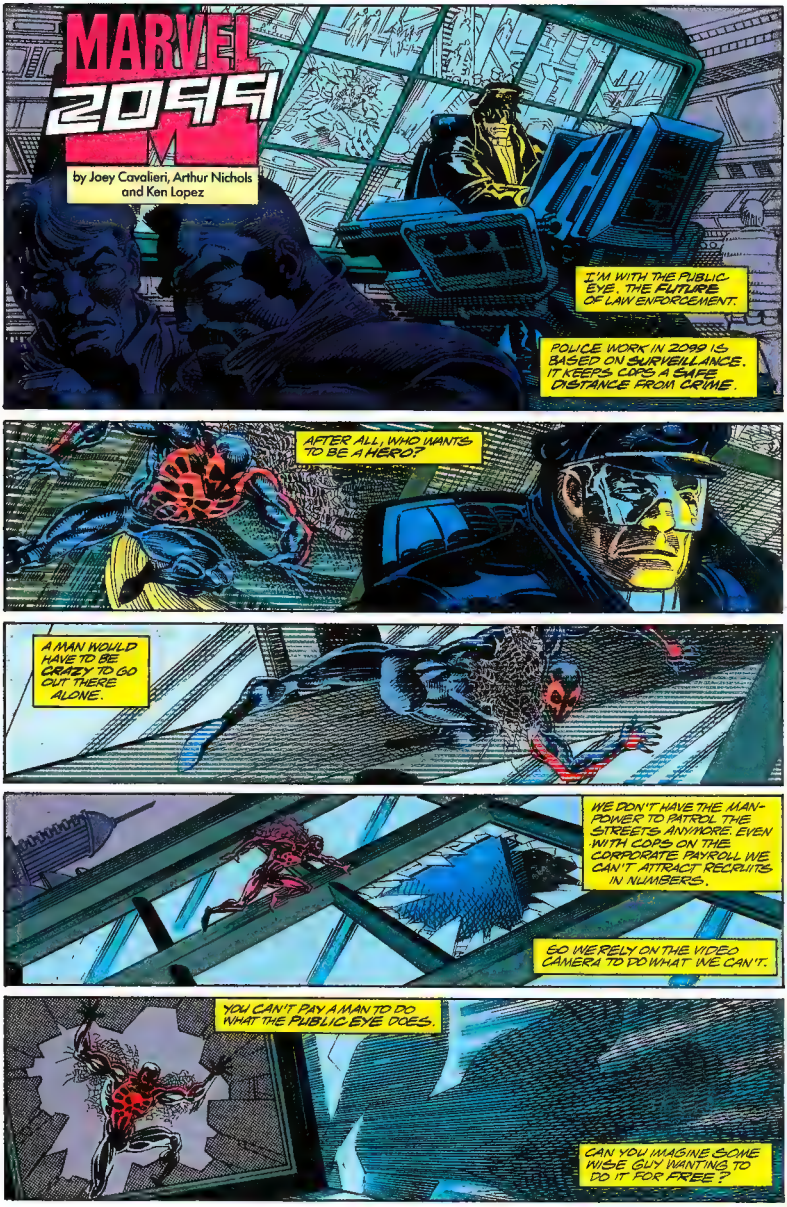
Writer/Editor Ralph Macchio, who oversees the course taken by such venerable characters as **THOR**, **CAPTAIN AMERICA**, and **DAREDEVIL** (all of whom have appeared in their own **MASTERWORKS** editions) awaits with anticipation the release of the **DOCTOR STRANGE MASTERWORKS** (another character whom Ralph edited during his star-studded career). "I would say that when I started reading them when they first came out," says Macchio, "there was a range of visual expression in [the Dr. Strange tales] that I had never seen in any other comic — the style and mood, the sense of entering a separate reality that I never got from any other book, and have seen in no other book since." By the Vishanti, high praise indeed!

Well, what do you know, it's almost the end of the page and I need more to read, at least until the next "Hot Sheet." So I asked someone with a broad knowledge of comics to point me in the direction of some other titles worth getting hooked on. Mike Raub of *Dream Factory*, is a guy whose tastes run the gamut of comic material. He suggested some books that offer something a bit different than the normal comic fare. "Bob Budiansky's **SLEEPWALKER** has a die-hard following, so you know that the book has something to offer — like good stories, interesting characters, and compelling drama, all with a psychologically introspective edge. Too many people wait for special crossovers to look at new books. If they wait for a crossover before looking at **SLEEPWALKER**, they're making a mistake and missing out on some good comics."

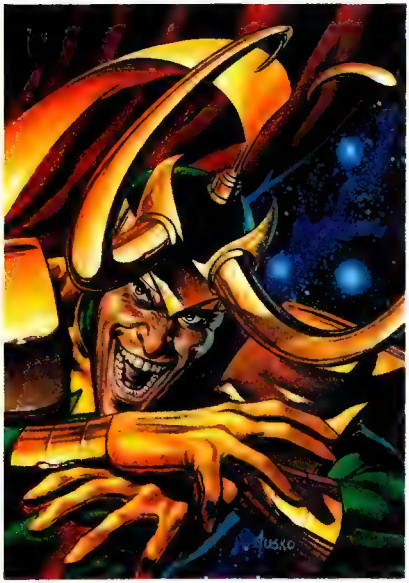
Sounds good. But what if I'm looking for something outside of the Marvel Universe all together. "Do you like to laugh?" asks Mike. "Then try Sergio Aragones' **GROO THE WANDERER**. This is good comics and good fun. And if you're feeling barbaric, try any one — or all — of the **CONAN** titles. This character has been around forever. For some people, it's the only book they read. Devotion like that speaks for itself."

And on that note. . .class dismissed!

— Jerry A. Novick


MARVEL 2099
by Joey Cavalieri, Arthur Nichols and Ken Lopez
I'M WITH THE PUBLIC EYE. THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT.
POLICE WORK IN 2099 IS BASED ON SURVEILLANCE. IT KEEPS COPS A SAFE DISTANCE FROM CRIME.
AFTER ALL, WHO WANTS TO BE A HERO?
A MAN WOULD HAVE TO BE CRAZY TO GO OUT THERE ALONE.
WE DON'T HAVE THE MAN-POWER TO PATROL THE STREETS ANYMORE. EVEN WITH COPS ON THE CORPORATE PAYROLL WE CAN'T ATTRACT RECRUITS IN NUMBERS.
SO WE RELY ON THE VIDEO CAMERA TO DO WHAT WE CAN'T.
YOU CAN'T PAY A MAN TO DO WHAT THE PUBLIC EYE DOES.
CAN YOU IMAGINE SOME WISE GUY WANTING TO DO IT FOR FREE?

MAKING MASTERPIECES PART TWO



As described last issue, this fall Skybox International, formerly Impel Marketing, will release a special 100-card set called *Marvel Masterpieces*™. These cards will feature fully-painted renditions of some of the most popular Marvel super heroes and villains, as rendered by illustrator Joe Jusko. The designs for the cards were created on an electronic computer file by Bob Budiansky, Marvel Executive Editor for Special Projects, and Arnie Sawyer of Sawyer Design Studios.

Upon completion, the finished designs and paintings were sent to Ken Baroff, Marketing Manager for Entertainment, and Rick Haynes, Director of Creative and Technical Services, at Skybox.

The artwork and electronic file were logged in to keep careful track of all materials, and the paintings were sent to a Los Angeles area printer, who began the "pre-press stage." During this stage, the artwork was computer scanned and color separations were made. A random sheet of samples was created and sent to Skybox for inspection. Ken, Rick and company checked it for color accuracy, registration (if the colors don't line up, the resulting picture

Photograph by Christopher Ebel

Executive Editor Bob Budiansky and artist Joe Jusko review a full, uncut composite proof sheet of the *Marvel III* trading cards, for which Joe illustrated the backgrounds. The same type of sheet will be provided for the *Marvel Masterpieces* set, for final approval prior to the cards going to press.

Four of the sample *Marvel Masterpieces* trading cards that will appear in various publications.

will be blurred), spots and blemishes. They also checked to make certain the colors were as intense as they could be.

Samples were sent back and forth until all of the corrections had been made to everyone's satisfaction. Then the "composite stage" was set to begin. The random proofs were married to the card border design Bob Budiansky and Arnie Sawyer had sent on computer disc. The result was a composite proof — a prototype of a sheet of uncut cards as it will look when printed.

The composite proofs were carefully checked by Skybox and by Bob Budiansky at Marvel. Once again, the back and forth process continued until all color, type and registration corrections were made. The printer then made the film for the actual cards, 100 cards to a sheet and, from them, the printing plates were produced.

At the "printing stage," the final cards were printed using an offset lithography press with 5-6 color capability, and a protective, high-gloss coating was applied to the cards using the same press. The first cards printed — in late June — were the sample cards, such as the one included in this issue of MARVEL AGE. The cards that will actually appear in stores were scheduled to be printed during July and August.

Marvel Masterpieces came off the press in sheets of 100 uncut cards, and a Skybox production representative performed a quality check to make sure the ink density was even, the colors were bright and the registration was perfect. This must be a constant during printing, for printing presses have been known to slip as much as a sixteenth of an inch during long press runs.

After the sheets of cards were printed, they were shipped to a converter (cutting and wrapping) facility. Skybox works with several such facilities, including one in Wisconsin and one in Dallas, TX. The *Marvel Masterpieces* cards were cut using one of two different machines. One is the "Guillotine," which operates exactly like its 18th century counterpart. After the sheets are cut into individual cards, they are manually stacked neatly. The other is a "Rollem slip stream" machine, which can be adjusted to specific widths (in this case, 2 1/2 x 3 1/2, the standard card size). Card sheets are rolled into the first cutting mechanism, which slices them into cards strips. Then the strips are pushed through the second cutting mechanism, and the resulting cards are stacked through feeders at the end.

The stacked cards were run through an assembly line, where they were randomly collated in pack-size stacks, wrapped in wax packs (each pack will contain six cards and will have a suggested retail price of 99 cents), then inserted into counter top "wax boxes." Then they were packed in "wax cases." For the first time, Skybox individually numbered both the wax boxes and wax cases, so fans will know exactly how many were produced, and which boxes in the run they have bought. They will be sent to the Skybox warehouse, to await shipment to hobby stores and comic shops the end of October, ultimately destined to be enjoyed by the legions of fans nationwide.

SkyBox
INTERNATIONAL

For three years, Skybox International, formerly Impel Marketing, has been riding the meteor created by a wide variety of high-quality trading card sets, including the *Marvel Universe* cards, and with more bold licensed projects planned for this year, Skybox's position as an industry leader is assured.

According to George White of Phoenix Communications, the group handling Skybox's promotional activities, the card company began as Impel in 1989. Since Impel did not own any properties of its own, the company signed an agreement with Pro Set to market that sports cards imprint. At the same time, Impel carefully studied the sports card market and identified holes that they could fill. They went out and acquired the official National Basketball Association (NBA) license and released their first card set — *NBA Hoops* basketball cards.

They followed the success of the *NBA Hoops* set with basketball's first high-quality set, the computer-generated *NBA Skybox* cards.

While fulfilling the sports side of the hobbyist's needs, they also recognized the potential for the non-sports area to burst out. In the Fall of 1990, having reached an agreement with Marvel Entertainment, they unleashed the *Marvel Universe Series One* cards.

This hugely successful set formally married the comics and cards hobbies, and launched the non-sports side of the card industry. According to Skybox's own testing and surveys, before Series One was released, the non-sports card side accounted for about five percent of the total card market. After Series One, that figure jumped to fifteen percent.

This increasing popularity shows no signs of slowing, and a number of special sets in the works, including *X-Men II*, scheduled for release in February, and *Marvel Series IV*, planned for next summer, will help Skybox maintain its position as one of the foremost players in the cards scene for years to come.

Skybox Marketing Manager Ken Baroff (right) and Creative Technical Services Director Rick Haynes (left) check a proof composite chromalin of the *Marvel III* cards against the original Captain Britain artwork.

Photograph courtesy of Skybox International

—Joseph Caponsacco

stan's SOAP BOX

Hi Heroes!

Once upon a time there was a great, big, green-skinned giant! When he was good he was oh, so good, but when he was baaaad we sold more copies than ever!

Now, journey with me down memory lane as we discuss the Incredible Hulk's on-again, off-again beginnings, as per the raffish recommendation of Marvel Age's ever-quotable editor-with-portfolio, Sagacious Steve Saffel.

Very few super hero characters have had such a shaky early career as Bruce Banner and is awesome alter ego. When we first introduced the battering behemoth in the early '60s, we had a smash hit on our hands. For the first few issues, fandom went wild and our sales went through the roof. But then, newer titles such as SPIDER-MAN, THE X-MEN, THOR and THE AVENGERS began to outsell Hulky and his own circulation began to drop!

We Bullpenners were indescribably disappointed, because we had really come to love our mixed up, muscle-bound menace, but there seemed to be nothing we could do about it. After all, in comic book publishing, you win some, you lose some. So, we did something that we at Marvel have very rarely done, something that none of our super villains themselves had ever been able to accomplish — we killed the Incredible Hulk in the only way possible — by discontinuing his book!

But sometimes real life seems to parallel fiction! We simply couldn't make the Hulk stay dead! We began to get dozens and then hundreds of letters from Hulkophiles all over the country, demanding to see more of our titanic, purple-trousered terror!

At first we couldn't believe the unexpected, rapidly-mounting response from the hordes of Marveldom. I mean, if they liked him so much, where were they when so many of his mags were sitting on the newsstand, unsold? However, we Barons of the Bullpen finally realized we had no choice but to bow to the wishes of Marveldom Assembled. But we did it in a cowardly way!

Still not certain how genuine the demand was, we decided to merely bring him back as a guest star in various other titles. And bring him back we did! There was a period in those early days when you could hardly pick up a Marvel masterpiece without finding the Hulk fighting with, or for, or against the Fantastic Four, or the Avengers, or the X-Men, or Spidey, or — you name 'em — the Hulk fought them all! Our rambunctious rampager proved to be one of the most popular guest stars in the fabulous Marvel firmament!

After a while, we began to suspect the Hulk might be a lot more popular than his earlier sales record had led us to believe. But we were still not convinced we should give him his own magazine. We couldn't bear the thought of striking out twice with the same character! So once again we took the cowardly way out. . .

Remember TALES TO ASTONISH? It was one of a trio of unique, experimental magazines we published in the sixties and seventies. The other two titles were STRANGE TALES and TALES OF SUSPENSE. Each of those mags featured not one, but two super hero strips for the price of one. Of course, each strip was only ten-pages long, but that just made us treasure every word and picture that much more!

I still remember that Iron Man was in TALES OF SUSPENSE and the Human Torch was in STRANGE TALES. As for the HULK, we featured him in TALES TO ASTONISH. The other heroes in those books were Captain America, Dr. Strange, Ant Man (or was he Giant Man then?) and Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD.

Well, as time went by, all those happy-go-lucky heroes, led by Hulky himself, got their own mags, except the Human Torch, who apparently kept busy enough flitting around with the Fantastic Four, and Giant Man (or was it Ant Man?) who had us so confused about his size that we could never have figured out what to call his mag!

So the story of our not-so-genial green giant had its happy ending, but there's more to it than that. Every new writer who took over the Hulking chores was inflamed with a burning desire to change the poor gamma-ray stricken guy somehow. Thus, in the past few years we've seen him become smart, then dumb, then smart again, we've seen his skin change to grey, we've seen him become twins, we've seen his secret identity become better known than Irving Forbush, and we've seen his skin change back to green again! (Personally, I'm waiting for the day when some genius decides he should be a pale fuchsia, with just a hint of blushing pink!)

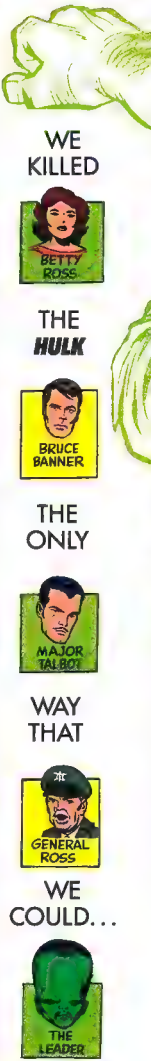
But here's the best part. During all these years and all those changes, the Hulk's personality seems to have grown and grown and grown. For a guy whose mag was dropped a few decades ago, a guy who's never likely to be invited to a P.T.A. meeting or a Sunday cocktail party, today he's one of the most sought after super heroes in the riotous ranks of comicdom!

And, with Marvel's eminent witty wunderkind, the irrepressible Peter David, presently handling the scripting chores, on stories replete with humor, crammed with action, and filled with unexpected, fantastic surprises on virtually every page, Bruce Banner's seven-foot playmate is, more than ever, one of the most brightly shining stars in the fabled Marvel firmament. It looks like he's going to remain at the top of the heap for as long as fandom has a soft spot in its collective heart for the monster who dwells within a part of us all!

I'm too choked with emotion to add any more, save that always welcome exit line, "Age quod agis!"

Excelsior!

— Stan Lee



EPICENTER

The stockings will be hung by the chimney with care, hoping to entice a certain jolly old gentleman down the small cramped and sooty crevice, to a final rest on a bed of flaming coals. A bizarre tradition, and inspiring material for the writers and artists of **CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER** as they release the first annual **HELLRAISER UNHOLIDAY SPECIAL.**

This macabre special will feature a variety of gifts to entertain and enthrall the entire family. A little Le-Marchand, Jr. Box for Johhny, an ancient and arcane book for Dad, and lots more for the whole family.

- ☐ Yes, I'd like a copy of the **HELLRAISER UNHOLIDAY SPECIAL.** I'm not afraid. Really I'm not. Honest.
- ☐ Yes, I'd like a copy of the **HELLRAISER UNHOLIDAY SPECIAL** for each member of my family. I saw Home Alone, and I think I'd like to check out that life style.
- ☐ Yes, I'd like a copy of the **HELLRAISER UNHOLIDAY SPECIAL,** but I'm not about to mark up my mint copy of **MARVEL AGE #118.**
- ☐ No, I would not like a copy of the — Hurgghhhh! *Eyaaaa!*
- ☐ Changed my mind. Yes, I would like a copy. Maybe two.

(Return the above coupon, or a reasonable facsimile, to your local comic book store.)

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— MARCUS McLAURIN

To become the object of worldwide admiration and renown, all you need is:

1) **DIVERSITY:** Illustrate every imaginable subject, from exotic fantasy to gritty westerns to far flung science fiction.

2) **QUALITY:** Make your work exude a passionate sense of composition, dramatic storytelling, and beautiful line work.

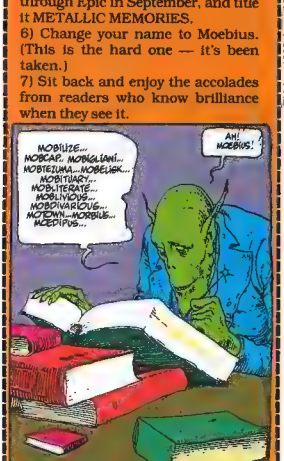
3) **PROLIFICITY:** Produce your work at an incredible rate of speed — while maintaining the quality — so that you vie with Sergio Aragones' title as the world's fastest artist.

4) **UNITY:** Have your work collected in volumes that reflect your brilliance as an illustrator.

5) **SPONTANEITY:** Frequently startle discriminating readers with new collections of your finest work, release it through Epic in September, and title it METALLIC MEMORIES.

6) Change your name to Moebius. (This is the hard one — it's been taken.)

7) Sit back and enjoy the accolades from readers who know brilliance when they see it.


AH! MOEBIUS!
MOBILIZE... MOBCAP... MOBGLIANI... MOBTEZUMA... MOBELISK... MOBITUARY... MOBLITERATE... MOBLIVIOUS... MOBQUARIOUS... MOTOWN... MORBIUS... MOEBIUS...

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In the '60's it was rock, but in the '90's the choice British imports are comics — and one of the most radical imports of the decade is the British anthology A-1. As part of Epic's 10th anniversary celebration, Editor Dave Elliot is producing a special four-issue, full-color bookshelf series of this bizarre collection of the weird and the wacky. Contributors to this landmark collection include P. Craig Russell, Simon (**LOBO**) Bisley, Brian (**CAMELOT 3000**) Bolland, Gary (**WARHEADS**) Erskine, Colin (**JUDGE DREDD**) MacNeil, Grant (**DOOM PATROL**) Morrison and Scott (**HELLRAISER**) Hampton. If "hot" is your cup of tea, and you like your biscuits sliced with the cutting edge, go for the A-1 jam.

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THE ONCE AND FUTURE EXCALIBUR

There is no doubt that Alan Davis loves his job—and it shows. His sure-footed blend of humour, adventure and exquisite draughtmanship on **EXCALIBUR** garners commercial and critical acclaim from readers and editors alike. Yet, despite it all, Davis won't contemplate offers of other work which might take him away from his "baby."

Despite his long association with **EXCALIBUR**, Alan Davis only started writing the book eighteen months ago. What advantages has that given him over simply drawing it? "**CONTROL!** he said, laughing megalomaniacally. "It is a trade-off that, the more freedom you have, the more responsibility you have. I enjoy that creatively, to be allowed to do what I want, to make my vision singular to me, so that I don't have to compromise in any part."

That singular vision gives a rare British flavour to **EXCALIBUR** which Davis barely notices: "I'm British, so I focus on things British. It's basically drawn from my own culture, it's not something I have to really work at."

If the British feel to the book is almost incidental, the humour most certainly is not. "The raison d'etre to **EXCALIBUR** is that it is a humour book. Now, one of the things I decided very early on is that Excalibur cannot be the butt of the joke: you can't respond to them as serious people when they're constantly wise-cracking and doing pratfalls. The only way to give the characters any integrity is to have them be like real people, and real people aren't the butt of a joke all the time."

Davis doesn't give much away when it comes to specific storylines, even though he has the future mapped out for the next sixteen issues or so. Ask him to run through what's in store for the individual members of the team, though, and he is happy to reveal, if not all, quite a lot. "The core group will remain the five original members and they will still be the heart of the book. There will be others involved, but it will be much more of a casual relationship."

Will there be an official team leader? "Excalibur has been informally led by Nightcrawler, although there has never been a vote on it. Many people thought Captain Britain was the leader, but he is too temperamental. Nightcrawler can think clearly while he is spinning at a hundred miles an hour upside down. That level-headedness translates into a good leadership quality. Indeed, the whole point of the N-Men scenario was to give Kurt the opportunity to develop the idea that he was the best person to lead Excalibur. While he was with the X-Men, he was the resident chirpy chappie with the funny lines, and he has realized that that made him sound lightweight.

There is going to be a lot of development with Kurt, from the point of view of how he shoulders the responsibilities of leadership, because he feels responsible for Phoenix's current condition. What has been happening to him in Germany [in recent issues of **MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS**] will be part of what he takes on board, and he will also have a new love interest."

Captain Britain has changed, too. No longer the clumsy clod of old, "he will be different from the way that we have seen him in the recent past. He has had quite a lot of development already. Something that really irritated me was that he had become a buffoon, which is why I introduced the idea of him having been cursed with this 'blunder' jinx. There will be an explanation of his powers because,

when the energy matrix was destroyed, that will have had quite a significant effect on them.

He is basically getting up to a level of Superman and he doesn't really think about letting other people do what he can do himself."

Surprisingly, the good Captain isn't Davis's favourite on the team. Meggan is. "I have got a great affinity for Meggan because she is the only one of the original five characters that I created outright. Meggan is actually very alien, and that will be explored to a great extent. It will basically dispel the idea that she is a stupid bimbo. Her spiritual values are vastly different from ours; she sees life, not through materialism and the same desires that we have. She has no use for language because she's empathic and perceives emotions. If you accept the premise that our language restricts the way that our brain works, her brain works in a different way because it isn't restricted by language. That is one of the differences that will show that her whole mind and everything about her works in a different way."

The other alien (of sorts) on the core team, Rachel/Phoenix, has become a brain-dead vegetable, although, true to her name, Phoenix will return. Davis isn't letting on when that might happen: "Rachel Summers is the sole possessor of the Phoenix force and she can't be separated from it. She should have died at the end of issue #50, when her whole psyche was completely destroyed, but the Phoenix force collected the shattered remnants together and it is letting them heal on their own. After the experience of messing around with Jean Grey's life, it knows that it doesn't understand enough about humans to try to fix things. So we won't know what

Rachel Summers is really like till she shows up again . . ."

Which leaves the last regular team member, Kitty, your everyday spunky, intelligent wonderchild with a pet dragon.

"One of the reasons why I introduced Feron was to have a foil for Kitty, so that she can see that she has led a charmed life with Excalibur and the X-Men. She will come to realize that, at some point in her life, in some ways, she was like Feron (though she was never as bad as he is). So there is going to be a non-romantic relationship between the two of them, where she will grow from watching what he is."

Feron himself is one of Excalibur's outer circle: not quite a member, not quite a guest, and easily the most hated figure in the book. Davis loves it: "We have had a lot of mail from people saying 'We hate the jerk — kill him!' (Laughter) It is great when someone can get so vitriolic about a character who has only had two or three lines of dialogue!

The thing is, that is the way you're *meant* to think of Feron at the moment. He thinks he deserved the Phoenix force, having been brought up his whole life to believe he is the chosen one. Also, he isn't human — he is from the same species as Roma, and there are a lot of resemblances between the two. He will definitely be around for a while."

The other two semi-regulars on the team are Cerise and Kylun. "There will be some more on Cerise's world. We will find out where she has come from and what is going on, and it won't be what people expect. Cerise will take a much more active part because she has got nowhere else to go." As for Kylun, he is leaving: "Kylun is going in search of his past life, to see if his parents really did die, as Vixen said. He has only been gone from Earth for a very short time so it hasn't changed much and he still remembers everything from his childhood, whereas he of course has changed a great deal. There is going to be an interesting build up between Kylun and his lost past."

What give **EXCALIBUR** much of its sure humourous touch are its minor characters, foremost among whom are the amoral Gatecrasher and her mercenary crew, the Technet. These days, they've gone their separate ways, with Davis promising the return of Gatecrasher "at some point" with a new Technet. "Gatecrasher is basically flipped-out because she has lost everything and she is being haunted by Hardboiled Henry, the little Tweety Pie-style bomb that blew up the lighthouse. He keeps on appearing, shouting at her and demanding revenge for his ultimate sacrifice. So she is going to attack Excalibur with a new menace."

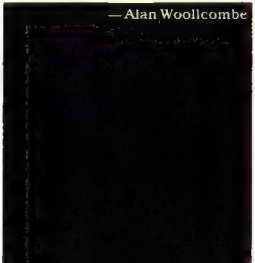
But Gatecrasher's popularity is as nothing compared to the Technet's when they became the N-Men. "I thought, what could be more stupid than to take the mickey out of the X-Men and call them Nightcrawler's Men? (Laughter) The whole motivation to the story was to show Nightcrawler up against the wall with his leg in a cast. He had to fight this menace and all he had was these lunatics that were watching *Sesame Street*. . .It got a lot of reaction." So will they be back? "Can I resist public demand?! (Chuckles) I don't know. I've got no immediate plans."

Davis has little to say about the remaining supporting cast. The recent relocation from the lighthouse to Braddock Manor brings its own problems, and the total wiping out of F16 means a reshuffle of loyalties for MicroMax, Dai Thomas and the other British intelligence agencies such as **W.H.O.** (the Weird Happenings Organisation). Merlin will pop up now and then, but for the rest the message is, "wait and see."

Part of the **EXCALIBUR** charm has been the vast cast of extras and alternate takes on the principals via infinite other earths. But there be fewer visits to these counter earths ("It got very confusing having so many different earths") and the frequent appearances of alternate Captain Britains and so forth will be dropped ("because it diminishes yourcharacters to have so many potential replacements"). Crossovers and gueststars will be kept to a minimum ("Part of the reason for bringing in MicroMax, Cerise and Kylun was to give us our own guest stars").

All this marks is a return to **EXCALIBUR**'s roots. There are any number of dangling plot threads remaining from the team's early days, some of which are already being explored, and feature such bad ol' boys and girls as Sat-Yr-9, Jamie Braddock (Captain Britain's evil brother), Vixen, Nigel Frobisher, the Crazy Gang, as well as obvious unfinished business with the X-Men and in particular Betsy "Psylocke" Braddock, leading to guest appearances by the U.S. mutant teams during the current bi-weekly run (issues #55-60). Scripter Scott Lobdell and pencilers Scott Kolins and Joe Madureira will be assisting Alan during the bi-weekly crunch. Further down the road, other American super heroes will be making their way into the pages of **EXCALIBUR**, though those guest shots still have to be firmed up ("We still have to sit down with the other editors," Editor Terry Kavanagh explained).

With so much of **EXCALIBUR**'s history still to explore, rather than go back to the future, Alan Davis would rather go forward to the past.



— Alan Woollcombe

Mark's REMARKS

We're back on the New Talent Department beat. For those of you with short memories, I've run columns on how to break into the comics biz in general and Marvel Comics in particular for a while now (issues #102, 105, 107, 109, and 111, to be exact). By way of example, I've been doing what no Marvel editor has the time to do: working with aspiring talent to bring their first submissions up to "publishability" level. We've gotten a serviceable plot, had the plot drawn, and now are at the script stage.

Submitted for your approval (and mine) is the script for this five-page Spider-Man versus Flag-Smasher story written by Jean-Jacques Dzialowski of Paris, whose name was selected at random by a **MARVEL AGE** assistant editor several administrations ago.

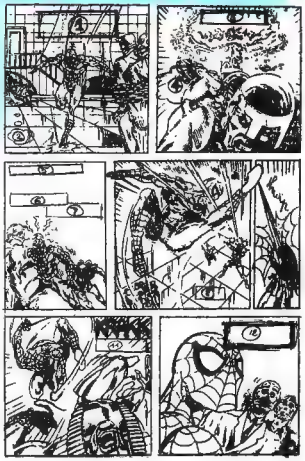
Okay, Jean-Jacques, take it away, and I'll give my pithy commentary afterwards. . . .

DZIALOWSKI/"Backsmash!"/***PAGE ONE***

1 Caption	The American Embassy, **PARIS, FRANCE. . .**
2 CRS Team Leader	‹. . .situation here remains unchanged. Terrorists belonging to the **ULTIMATUM** organization, led by the American super criminal known as the **TRAPSTER** are holding people hostage for ransom.›*
3 Caption	‹As our own local super celebrity seems to have taken a day off. . .**›,**
4 Caption	‹. . .I'm sorry to say I just can't see any quick and easy way to get this mess straightened out. It really couldn't have happened at a nicer moment.›
5 Title	**BACKSMASH!**
6 Caption	"Que desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum" "Let him who desires peace prepare for war" **VEGETIUS,** De Re Militari.
7 Caption	*Translated from the French. **The **PEREGRINE.**
8 Credits	

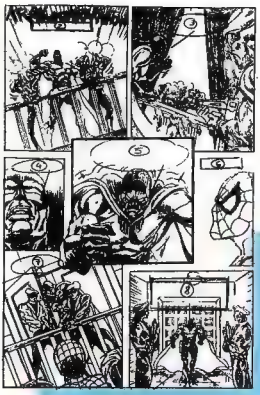
DZIALOWSKI/"Backsmash!"/***PAGE TWO***

1 Caption	Easy enough. I don't even *dare* think things can still happen that quick anymore. Guess I'm just getting a little more *pessimistic* with each day that passes. . .
3 Cap	. . .or more realistic. Sure looks like everyone *needs* the *amazing* **SPIDER-MAN!**
4 Trapster (TH)	. . .No. **NO!** Not again! **Not HERE!!!** I didn't come here to *face* him again! Why is he *tormenting* me?...
5 Cap	. . .Why won't he leave me *in peace*??...
6 Cap	Why can't a mere photo assignment this *far* from home be all *quiet* for once??
7 Cap	As if troubles were *stuck* to my back.
8 Cap	...**WHY?**
9 Fx	***THWIP***
10 Fx	***KRAKK***
11 Cap	Guess they are, yeah.
12 Cap	That's the problem with being a hero. If you're not looking for *troubles*...



DZIALOWSKI/"Backsmash!"/***PAGE THREE***

1 Fx	***KRAKatteKRAKAKATOW***
2 Caption	. . .troubles are looking for *you*.
3 Flag-Smasher	Is there *no place* on Earth where costumed *fools* won't *meddle* with matters they do *not* comprehend?...
4 Smasher	. . .with my sacred duty...



5 Smasher	. . .I will bring *nationalism down!!!* This *obsolete* concept that divides the world *has* to be *destroyed* along with its *symbols!!!* It is the *only* way to *unite* mankind and achieve *world peace!!!*...
6 Cap	...Can you understand??!
7 Smasher	Guards, eliminate him. I've got more important work to do.
8 Cap	My mission cannot tolerate any more delaying, for time is counting down. The world becomes more *violent* each day because of its *flawed* structures. I must *end* this madness before it's too late.

DIALOWSKI/"Backsmash!"/**PAGE FOUR**

1 Caption	The money I'll soon get will reassert **ULTIMATUM'S** *power,* therefore ensuring our *success;* my half-witted "ally" will draw attention to allow our escape and the time-bomb I'll then detonate will. . .
2 Cap	. . .silence. . .
3 Cap	*No!* I cannot let him *ruin* what took so much time to *build!!*
4 Cap	Things don't always happen the way you'd like them to. . .
5 Spider-Man	. . .do they?
6 Cap	Knocking out all the merry bunch was *easy* once led away from the hostages. And as they are now safe on the balcony outside. . .
7 Cap	. . .I can show my new pal how much disillusions *often hurt* you. . . .

DIALOWSKI/"Backsmash!"/**PAGE FIVE**

1 Caption	**. . .hard.**
2 Flag-Smasher	*Fool!* You do not *realize!* Should I fail, the world is *doomed!!!* Nations will grow jealous of each other, their lust for power will drive them at each other's *throats!* World wars will break out! The Gulf war was only the *beginning!!* Armageddon can be *aborted!* By gathering the countries into one huge family, there'll be no more dissensions, no more cause for war!!!
3 Smasher	I must *succeed!* I **MUST!**
4 Cap	No. Terrorism *cannot* be the solution. It's just running away from the real difficulties.
5 Cap	Arguing with guys like him is a waste of time. They never change their minds. Doesn't he realize he's already doing what he seeks to prevent, he's waging his own personal war!
6 Smasher	You don't *know* what you're *doing!!* You're fighting against your own *salvation!!* The **FLAG-SMASHER** will make you *see* the light!!!
7 Cap	You can't destroy what took so much time to build just for the sake of creating something new. This is way too radical, too easy. I can't allow that. Guess we all do. . . .
9 Cap	. . .just wonder which one of us truly is. . .
10 Cap	**. . .FLAG-SMASHER??. . .**
11 Cap	Terrorism does not help matters. Even to achieve world peace. Violence just breeds more violence. There are other, *better* ways. There *must* be.
12 Cap	"Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war" John MILTON, To Cromwell

Gruenwald, again, and my overall critique: Not bad. Here's a page by page commentary:

Page 1: Everything here is fine, but Spider-Man is aching for a clever line. A good rule of thumb is that characters should come on stage *in character*. While S-M is doing something characteristic, he could also be *saying* something characteristic in order to maximize character information in the limited space available. I would also want Spider-Man identified by name on this page by the Trapster, someone in the crowd, or S-M himself. I'd even accept it in a caption, though this is my least favorite solution. As far as the Latin quote goes, while I'm a personal fan of Latin quotes and it is apropos to the subject at hand, I think most of our readers would find it a bit pretentious in so short a story. I'd lose it to make room for a "Spider-Man?!? Whouuf!" from the Trapster.

Page 2: What you've indicated in captions belongs in thought balloons. Captions, even first person ones, do not have the immediacy or sense of "this-is- what -he's-thinking-right-now," and are generally used for after-the-fact narration. As for Spider-Man's first balloon, it's straightforward, but not distinctively Spidey enough. Spider-Man tends to have a more colorful way of expressing himself — even in thought balloons! In Line 2, the "no" connects with Line 4, but in between there's a Line 3 that doesn't relate. It's not a good idea to interrupt sentence flow like this. Line 5: The Trapster's? Hard to tell with your homogeneous caption style, which I'd have you convert to conventional thought balloons. Again, S-M's lines 6, 7, and 12 are too morose for the irascible hero. In line 12, I'm not certain Spider-Man would generalize like this. I think he sees his own luck as different from most other heroes' and would personalize this sentiment more.

Page 3: On the whole page which introduces the Flag-Smasher, he is not identified by name. Oops! Line 3: I'm not sure a man wearing a costume would make the distinction "costumed fools" — pot calling the kettle black and all that. He'd find a more personal way to identify his enemies. Line 4: "Sacred" sounds religious, and, though he may feel something like unto religious fervor when it comes to his mission, in this limited space I think the word "sacred" is misleading. Line 6: Spider-Man should have some snappy retort to this. He should also have made known what he thought of this second villain showing up where he only counted on one. Spider-Man is the reader's focal character, and through him we get what we're supposed to think and feel about the goings-on. Don't leave us in the dark unless there is a grand purpose. (There doesn't seem to be one here.) We need to have Spider-Man's predicament (can't attack while his gunsels are aiming at the hostages) hammered home here. This is the biggest dilemma of the story — the pivotal point, and Spider-Man's reaction reveals character! Line 8: While a good statement of purpose, Flag doesn't seem to be saying it to the two guards. Maybe this should be a thought balloon.

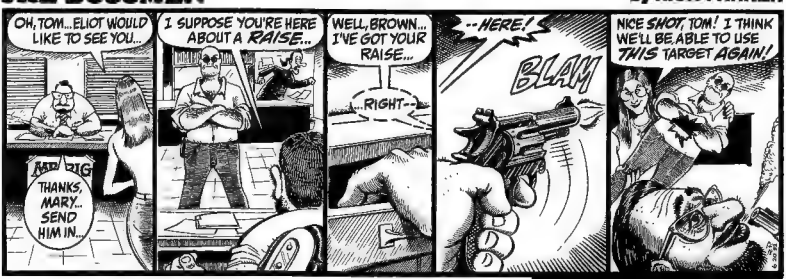
Page 4: Line 1: Yes, definitely switch to a thought balloon here. Line 2: Needs to be clearer. Apparently he is expecting to hear gunshots and doesn't, but the single word isn't conveying this. Line 3 and 4: two different narrators, same caption effect — not good. Any device that makes a reader have to stop and think, "Now wait a minute — who's saying this?" yanks the reader out of the story flow and hampers his/her enjoyment. Line 6: It could be a lot clearer how Spider-Man saved the hostages . Line 7: Wouldn't Spider-Man be a little *annoyed* at someone who threatened the lives of innocents and call him something other than "my new pal"?

Page 5: Line 2: The speech is too long and needs to be trimmed. Between line 4 and 5, S-M has a spider-sense flash and it's not explained what is happening. It makes a difference, since it is what enables him to avoid the blast in the next panel. Line 5: Spider-Man says arguing with guys like Flag is a waste of time, but what does he do? In Line 7, he argues with him. In fact he almost preaches, something definitely out of character. His musing about being a "flag-smasher" himself — I don't get it. I think it's trying to be ironic, but it was Flag's body that broke the flagpole. I think another ironic statement might work better here. Line 11: More heavy-handed moralizing. You could get this sentiment across as dialog providing you "spiderize" it a bit. Line 12: Another quote in a mere five pages! Well, it works better here than at the beginning, but I'd still lose it.

So there you have it. Generally script revisions this heavy are sent back for the writer to do. Editors will make word adjustments here and there themselves, sometimes even adding a line (usually in consultation with the writer), but nothing as extensive as is needed here. So at this point, the script is back to you, Jacques, for another go-around.

Folks, my editor and I hope to wrap up my New Talent Department columns in another installment so I can pursue other remarkable matters. By the next time we check in on our story, we'll have an edited final version of the script, lettered on the artboard, inked and colored, so I can critique those phases of the creative process. So until next month, remember, submit no submission until it's ripe and ready to fall off the vine.

THE BOSSMEN by RICK PARKER


OH, TOM...ELIOT WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU...
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE HERE ABOUT A RAISE...
WELL, BROWN... I'VE GOT YOUR RAISE...
...RIGHT--
--HERE!
BLAM
NICE SHOT, TOM! I THINK WE'LL BE ABLE TO USE THIS TARGET AGAIN!
MR. BIG
THANKS, MARY.. SEND HIM IN...

— Mark Gruenwald

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Hembeck's Page

IT'S UNDENIABLE: *THE INCREDIBLE HULK* IS CLEARLY ONE OF MARVEL COMICS' MOST *FAMOUS* CHARACTERS. AND YET, WHAT'S USUALLY FORGOTTEN IS THAT HE WAS *ALSO* THE EARLIEST *FAILURE* OF THE THEN FLEDGLING COMICS GROUP, DEBUTING SHORTLY AFTER THE TREND SETTING *FANTASTIC FOUR*, THE SAVAGE ALTER EGO OF DR. BRUCE BANNER WAS CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH AS THE F.F.'S *THING*: SUPER HEROICS CROSSED WITH THE SORT OF *MONSTER* THAT DOMINATED *STRANGE TALES*, *JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY*, *TALES TO ASTONISH* AND MANY OTHER TITLES PRODUCED JUST *PRIOR* TO THE ONSET OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE. (WHICH IS *NOT* TO SAY THAT THE THEN ATLAS COMICS *DIDN'T* OFFER A DIVERSIFIED LINE, WHAT WITH WESTERN TITLES LIKE *RAWHIDE KID* AND *KID COLT OUTLAW*, TEEN ROMANCE BOOKS SUCH AS *PATSY WALKER* AND *PATSY AND HEDY*, AND WAR MAGS LIKE *BATTLE* AND, LATER, *SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS* -- JUST THAT THE MONSTER BOOKS WERE THEIR *BREAD AND BUTTER*.) CANCELED AFTER SIX ISSUES IN HIS OWN TITLE, *THE HULK* WAS RELEGATED TO *JOURNEY* WHILE THE MARVEL BRAIN TRUST FIGURED OUT THE *BEST* WAY TO RE-INTRODUCE THE BIG GUY TO THE READING PUBLIC. ULTIMATELY, OL' GREENSKIN RETURNED AS A CHARTER MEMBER OF *THE AVENGERS*, BUT WHAT IF THE POWERS THAT WERE HAD DECIDED THAT THE THEN NOVEL SUPER HERO GENRE *WAS TOO CRAMPED* TO REINVEST THEIR CLEARLY CHARISMATIC CHARACTER INTO A SECOND TIME? WHAT IF THEY THOUGHT *INSTEAD* TO PLACE THE GAMMA GUY SMACK DAB IN THE MIDDLE OF *ANOTHER* COMICS GENRE OR TWO? SOMETHING LIKE...

I SAY YER YELLA, KID HULK!
WHUT IN TARNATION?
PUNY POLECAT MUST BE PLUMB LOCO -- KID HULK NOT YELLOW; KID HULK GREEN!?
KID HULK OUTLAW
Featuring
"The Green Gunslinger of Gamma Gulch"

SGT. HULK AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS
For these NAZIS, it was--
"WRONG Time, REICH Place!"
Oooo-wee, CORPORAL, AH DO DECLARE, WITH A TOP KICK LIKE SGT. HULK DOIN', ALL THE WORK---
--THIS IS THE REAL EASY COMPANY!!
SGT. HULK SMASH PUNY NAZIS!

WHO ARE YOU GOING TO ASK TO THE PROM, BUZZ--ME?
--OR ME?
OMIGOSH! IF I DON'T ASK PATSY, SHE'LL KILL ME!
BUT IF I DON'T ASK HULKY!?!-- SHE'LL BURY ME!
PATSY and HULKY in This Issue--
"The Glamour Girl Or The Gamma Girl?"

FRED HEMBECK: © 1982 Fred Hembeck character and the distinctive likeness.. thereof is a trademark of FRED HEMBECK. Colored by Paul Becton.

THWIP! SNIKT! BAMF!

Send your letters to: MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE, c/o Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016.

Attention Correspondents: All letters to be considered for publication must include your complete name and address, though we will gladly withhold that info on request!

This month's snappy letter column title comes to us from Lorenzo Napolano of LaSalle, Quebec in Canada. Thanks a lot, Lorenzo! By featuring a crossover among three of Marvel's mightiest characters, your title has cleverly hit upon a topic that's been at the center of attention in a good deal of our mail recently. You may recall that we talked about the issue of crossovers in this very column a couple of months back. But we've gotten so much mail on this particular subject recently that we've decided to give it the focus it deserves by printing *two* LETTERS OF THE MONTH! That's right; this time around, we've actually selected a *duo* of letters that we think will be of particular interest to the rampaging hordes of Marveldom. And why? Hey, that's just the kind of generous guys and gals we are.

Dear Marvel,

Having read many of your books over the last few years, I have enjoyed myself immensely. You have had innovative and original stories, and a few dry and dull ones as well.

However, that is not the reason I am writing you this letter. The reason is that over the past year, Marvel's comics have begun to feature more and more special guest stars.

I can remember when a special guest star really was special, maybe once or twice a year, but now every issue of every comic book seems to have one. Have the heroes of the Marvel Universe become such wimps that Spider-Man cannot fight one psychotic cyborg without Ghost Rider's help? Or Wolverine cannot take out a non-super powered street gang without the aid of Shatterstar?

Two years ago, they could have mopped the floor with them and eaten a pizza at the same time, but now? Spider-Man would probably need help to fight the Toad and Wolverine certainly would need help to defeat a rogue girl scout.

The problem has grown so out of control that eight out of the fourteen books I collect had special guest stars in the latest issues.

When I buy a book, I buy it for the star of the book. If I want to read about Ghost Rider, I'll buy his comic book, not Spider-Man's or the X-Men's. I can read about the Punisher in his own book; I don't want to read about him in MOON KNIGHT.

I urge you to return to the days when "special guest star" did not mean a regular in the book.

Wolverine should watch out for that rogue girl scout. He'll probably need the Avengers' help to defeat her.

Brad Dicken
31446 Street, Andrews
Westlake, OH 44145

Dear Steve,

Since MARVEL AGE's letter column is really the only one around where I can talk about Marvel Comics in general, I decided to write you. And since #113 was a theme issue on team-ups (THE INFINITY WAR, BLOOD AND GLORY, Mark's Remarks, Marvel Collectors' Item Classic), I thought that I could address you on this pressing topic.

I don't know whether you read your competition, but if you did, you might have read a comic book where I said, ". . . Marvel does most of their team-ups for money, and most, if not all, have no real point. . ." Unfortunately, when that letter was printed, the lettercol editor eliminated another sentence I wrote in the original letter: "That [my comment] is not an insult to all the care that Marvel puts into their comics. . ." And since you didn't get to read that part, I'd like to explain it a little further and explain just why I made a comment in the first place.

As Mark Gruenwald acknowledged, Marvel Comics has had its share of team-ups with no real point or value, and that were just made for publicity. Well, those were the team-ups that I was referring to. I am, actually, a big fan of team-up books but think that some are pointless. But that doesn't include every team-up. "Round Robin" in THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN was great, and the X-Men/Ghost Rider team-ups occurring right now look promising, as do some others, such as all of the team-ups in MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS. But take Erik Larsen's "Revenge of the Sinister Six" or the Punisher storyline in MOON KNIGHT. "Sinister Six" was a wonderful story that would have been just as effective without ten thousand heroes in it! I think that Erik should have relied on his own abilities rather than extra characters to sell his book. Without the Hulk, Deathlok, and Sleepwalker, "Sinister Six" still would have been great. No offense, but I believe that the Punisher was included in MOON KNIGHT just to boost Moon Knight's sales. Those team-ups are the ones I don't appreciate.

Now, I hope that I have cleared things up and set everything straight. Yeah, your team-up books might be too frequent in my opinion. (That doesn't include crossovers such as THE INFINITY GAUNTLET or INFINITY WAR — I think books like that are brilliant! I'm not, and haven't been, talking about massive crossovers in this letter, just regular team-ups.) But Marvel Comics is still great, and I don't want you guys thinking I'm a Marvel basher. I write letters to you guys because I enjoy your comics . . .I collect almost every book you put out. And do you want to know why? Marvel Comics is fun. Just because I made one comment, that doesn't mean I'm not a Marveloid anymore, and that's the entire reason I wrote this letter. If possible, please print this letter so I can see what my

fellow collectors and even casual readers feel about team-up stories. Thank you.

Joey Marchese
P.O. Box 2165
Union, NJ 07083-2165

And thank *you*, Joey for letting us know what you think. Actually, your letter pretty much sum up the whole range of opinions on guest appearances and crossovers. For every letter that we get saying that crossovers are getting out of hand ad asking us to cut back, we get others from people who tell us how much they like them and even (like Jess) asking us to do more of them.

So what do we do — print more crossovers or cut back? If we were to cut back, then that wouldn't really be fair to those Marvelites who want to see more. In our Solomon-like wisdom, it seems to us that the fairest way to deal with the issue is to keep crossovers available for those Marvelites who want to see them. After all, as we said before, nobody's forcing people who don't want to read crossovers to go out and buy them. It's your hard-earned money, folks, and you should be spending it on things *you* enjoy.

But that's not to say that our Letters of the Month don't raise some interesting points. Does the presence of a guest star imply that the lead character couldn't handle a particular villain on his or her own? By extension, does the fact that the Thing appears with the Fantastic Four every month mean that he wouldn't be able to handle menaces without the help of his three teammates?

We think there's an awful lot of room for discussion here, and we'd love to hear what people out there think. What do you think about crossovers? Are there too many? Too few? How do you think they affect the characters? Take the matter (and a writing implement) into hand and let us know!

And here you thought Pete just had a lot of Incompletes. . .

And speaking of Incompletes, don't worry — we wouldn't dream of leaving this column incomplete by leaving out our monthly. . .

Yup, it's time once again to use our highly sophisticated surveillance techniques to listen in on the not-so secret messages being passed between our favorite Wild Agent of Marvel. If you'd like to be included in this section, you can either write to us on WAM stationery or simply include your WAM membership number with your letter.

Dear MARVEL AGE,

First of all, I really enjoy reading MARVEL AGE. Now for the good part. I found a No-Prize-winning mistake in the give-away INFINITY GAUNTLET poster; you people made it the cover of issue #3. But the give-away poster was really messed up. All the costumes are wrong. Quasar is wearing his old costume, and so is Nova in the pinup. The old Thor is in the pinup instead of the new. The Scarlet Witch is wearing the wrong costume and Cyclop's costume covers his whole body in the pinup, while in the comic book, his hair is showing.

Another mistake is in the MARVEL 1989 YEAR IN REVIEW, page 34. When you listed the names of the X-Men, instead of Psylocke's name, you put Shadowcat's.

Until the Blob does a commercial for Ultra Slim Fast, Make Mine Marvel!

Simon Grynberg
(Address withheld by request)

Sorry, Simon, but no No-Prize this time. Traditionally, No-Prizes have been given, not just for finding mistakes, but for also finding a reasonable explanation that shows why they weren't really mistakes in the first place. We know of a few politicians who probably wouldn't mind giving out a No-Prize or two themselves.)

The criteria for receiving No-Prizes has changed significantly in the past year or so. Nowadays, No-Prizes aren't awarded for coming up with clever explanations of goofs. Instead, they are awarded for service above and beyond the call of duty, such as donating comics to a children's hospital. Those kinds of effort deserve to be acknowledged, and we're glad to do so with a sparkling new No-Prize.

As for the INFINITY GAUNTLET cover, the explanation is simple. The series was many moons in the making, so by the time issue #3 arrived, the art had to be corrected to represent changes that had taken place. The promotion, which has to be done earlier, used the original version.

FIRST WEEK

AVENGERS WEST COAST #89 1.25
CAGE #9 1.25
Cage is hired to capture the Rhino.
CAPTAIN AMERICA #410 1.25
Cap is attacked by Zeitgeist, the super hero assassin. Featuring the Falcon.
DAREDEVIL #311 1.25
DARKHAWK #22 1.25
Ghost Rider guest-stars as Chris Powell learns more about the origin of the Darkhawk amulet. "Return to Forever" part 2 of 5.
DINOSAURS:
A CELEBRATION #1-4 4.95
EXCALIBUR #58 1.75
Spectal gueststars : the X-Men.
MARVEL
MASTERWORKS #21 34.95
Deluxe hard-bound reprint of FANTASTIC FOUR #31-40 and ANNUAL #2.
MUTATIS #1 2.25
A mutant virus capable of turning humans into grotesque creatures must be stopped in this taut science fiction detective thriller.
NAMOR #33 1.25
NIGHT THRASHER #3 1.75
It's payback time as Night Thrasher goes one-on-one against Gideon.
NIGHTSTALKERS #2 1.75
"Revenant Season" part 1 of 3.
NOMAD #8 1.75
Los Angeles three hours after the Rodney King decision: Nomad and Bucky on patrol. 'Nuff said.
ORIGINAL GHOST RIDER #6 1.75
Ghosty defeats the Medicine Man, only to be confronted with the menace of the wicked Witch Woman.
REN & STIMPY #1 2.25
Happy, happy, joy, joy! Nickelodeon's outrageous heroes in a new monthly series. Special scratch 'n sniff cards for this spectacular debut!
SHE-HULK #46 1.75
SINKING 19.95
The psychological descent of an ordinary man into the depths of paranoid schizophrenia.
SPIDER-MAN 2099 #2 1.25
The all-new Spidey of the future has to come to grips with his new-found spider powers in, "Kill Me Tomorrow."
TERROR INC. #6 1.75
TOXIC CRUSADERS #8 1.25
Two slimy stories featuring the horrible Headbanger and the noxious NoZone.
UNCANNY X-MEN #295 1.25
Wolverine confronts Cable as the rest of the team face Apocalypse and Stryfe.
WCW WRESTLING #9 1.25
The sensational Sting vs. the evil Ghoul.
WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #95 1.25
Ghost Rider and Venom guest-star in a "Spirits of Vengeance" offshoot.

SECOND WEEK

ALPHA FLIGHT #115 1.75
The unknown origin of Weapon Omega in part 2 of, "Extreme Prej-udice."
AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #1 2.95
MARVEL MILESTONES presents this special edition reprint.
AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #370 1.25
Invasion of the Spider Slayers" part 3 of 6.
BARBIE #24 1.25
Barbie organizes a group of citizens to build an animal preserve in the local park.
DARKHOLD #3 1.75
DEATH'S HEAD #1 1.75
Beginning a brand-new ongoing series!
GHOST RIDER #32 1.75
Dan Ketch is saved by Dr. Strange.
GROO THE WANDERER #96 2.25
GUARDIANS OF
THE GALAXY #31 1.25
The Guardians vs. the Badoon, guest-starring Captain America.
CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER
BOOK OF THE DAMNED #3 4.95
The third Hellraiser companion features more character studies and historic accounts of the horrific world created by Clive Barker.
MARVEL COMICS
PRESENTS #117 1.50
Wolverine, Giant Man and Iron Fist, plus a special Lockheed solo story.
METROPOL A.D. #3 2.95
ONYX OVERLORD #3 2.50
PUNISHER/CAPTAIN AMERICA:
BLOOD AND GLORY #3 5.95
PENDRAGON II #6 1.75
Spider-Man guests as the Knights suit up in all-new armor to fight an all-new war.
PUNISHER WAR ZONE #10 1.75
QUASAR #41 1.25
Rendered powerless by the Ultimate Nullifier, Quasar is replaced as protector of the universe by his deceased predecessor, Marvel Boy.
RAVAGE #1 1.25
Written and created by Stan "the Man" Lee himself.
SAVAGE SWORD
OF CONAN #204 2.25
Part 3 of the epic Conan story, "The City of Magicians."
SILVER SABLE #7 1.25
Sable and Deathlok find the stolen Statue of Liberty.
67 SECONDS 15.95
In the midst of a terrorist kidnapping, it's the most irreplaceable 67 seconds of a life.
SLEEPWALKER #19 1.25
THOR #455 1.25

WOLVERINE #64 1.75
WONDER MAN #16 1.25
Wondy's out of control. Luckily Armed Response comes to the rescue.
X-MEN:
X-TINCTION AGENDA TPB 15.95
Re-presenting the 9 part X-Tinction Agenda storyline from X-Men, New Mutants and X-Factor./

THIRD WEEK

AVENGERS #357 1.25
CONAN #263 1.25
CONAN SAGA #69 2.25
EXCALIBUR #59 1.75
FISH POLICE #3 1.25
The unsuspecting Inspector Gill is lured into the evil Hook's diabolical criminal organization.
GHOST RIDER: FEAR 5.95
Ghosty teams up with Captain America to battle Scarecrow.
GHOST RIDER: RISE OF THE MIDNIGHT SONS DOOR POSTER 15.95
G.I. JOE #131 1.25
HELL'S ANGELS #6 1.75
Guest stars from across the pond: the X-Men.
INCREDIBLE HULK #400 2.25
The Hulk faces the Leader in the anniversary climax to "Ghost From the Past."
MARVEL AGE #119 1.00
MARVEL TALES #268 1.25
Still wearing a mysterious black costume from outer space, Spidey battles the Jack O'Lantern for the Hobgoblin's battle wagon.
MORBIUS #4 1.75
Spider-Man guest stars as the living vampire faces the demonic Dr. Paine.
NICK FURY AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. #42 1.75
The aftermath of, "Cold War of Nick Fury."
NIGHTBREED #22 2.25
PUNISHER #73 1.25
SLAPSTICK #2 1.25
Overkill sets his assassin's sights on Slapstick.
SPIDER-MAN #29 2.95
"Return to the Mad Dog World" — part 1.
SPIDER-MAN 30TH ANNIVERSARY POSTER MAGAZINE 3.95
A collection of 32 Spidey posters featuring the art of Frank Miller, John Romita, Erik Larsen, Todd McFarlane and more.
WARLOCK & THE INFINITY WATCH #11 1.75
WHAT IF #44 1.25
What if the Punisher had been possessed by Venom?
X-FACTOR #85 1.25
It's Wolverine and Bishop vs. Cable, and only the strongest will survive.
X-MEN #15 1.25
Apocalypse battles Stryfe in the super-villain showdown of the century.
X-MEN ANIMATION #2 1.25
Continuing the comics adaptation of the new X-Men animated TV show.

FOURTH WEEK

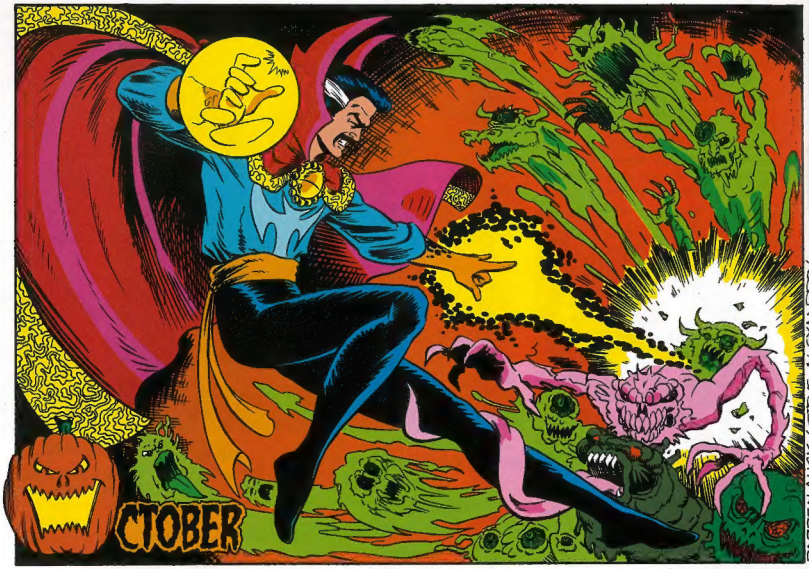
AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #371 1.25
Invasion of the Spider Slayers" part 4.
BARBIE FASHION #24 1.25
Barbie throws a surprise Halloween party for Christie.
DEATHLOK #18 1.75
"Cyberwar" part 2 of 5 — guest-starring Silver Sable.
DEATH'S HEAD/KILLPOWER: BATTLETIDE #1 1.75
A four-issue limited series starring two of Marvel UK's top powerhouses!
DIGITEK #1 1.95
Beginning the eagerly-awaited debut of Digitek, guest-starring Deathlok.
DR. STRANGE #48 1.75
The immortal Vishanti ask the Doc to pay back his debt to them by fighting in an interdimensional war — for the next five thousand years!
FANTASTIC FOUR #371 1.25
IRON MAN #287 1.25
In black-and-white armor, the new Iron Man takes on the atomic-powered villain, Atom Smasher.
JAMES BOND JR. #12 1.25
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #118 1.50
Four tales featuring Wolverine, Ghost Rider, Giant Man, Solo and Iron Fist.
MARVEL REQUIRER #33 Free!
Available in comic book stores everywhere.
MARVEL UNIVERSE HANDBOOK #25 4.50
MOON KNIGHT #45 1.75
Infected with the Demogoblin virus, a dying Moon Knight desperately seeks a cure in, "Moon Knight's Inferno" featuring the new art team of James Fry and Chris Ivy.
MOTORMOUTH #7 1.75
Cable, the Punisher and Nick Fury join Motormouth in a temporary alliance to defeat the evil legions of Mys-Tech.
NEW WARRIORS #30 1.25
The situation in war-torn Trans-Sabal becomes desperate in part 2 of "World War I and II."
PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #49
The Magnificent Seven haven't given up — their goal is still to kill the Punisher.
SILVER SURFER #75
A 48-page anniversary issue with a special silver-embossed cover.
SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #195 1.25
"The Death of Vermin" continues.
SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #5 1.75
THE 'NAM #75 1.75
Special issue titled, "Stateside" showing the US reaction to the Mylai Massacre.
THOR #456 1.25
WARHEADS #7 1.75
Guest starring, Death's Head and the Silver Surfer.

WHAT THE?! #24 1.25
WILLIAM SHATNER'S TEK WORLD #4 1.50
In Mexico, Jake faces his ex-lover and enemy, the revolutionary Warbride.
X-FORCE #17 1.25
Apocalypse joins X-Force to help defeat Stryfe and save Professor X's life.
X-MEN CLASSIC #78 1.25
Cyclops falls in love with Madelyn Pryor as the menacing Mastermind carries out his twisted scheme to destroy the X-Men.

MARVEL AGE CROSSOVER GUIDE

Mutant Fall Crossover — X-Cutioners Song:

UNCANNY X-MEN #295
X-FACTOR #85
X-MEN #15
X-FORCE #17



DARREN ALICK / STEVE ALEXANDER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
CONAN #1, 1970				HAPPY BIRTHDAY DON DALEY 1	2	NEW THIS MONTH: HULK #400
MARCUS McLAURIN MIKE CARLIN 4	5	6	ARIANE LENSHOEK PINHEIRO 7	MIKE LACKEY 8	9	
11	COLUMBUS DAY 12	RITA ADELSTEIN 13	NEW THIS MONTH: RAVAGE 2099	JOE SINNOTT BOB HALL 16		
ENTER WONDER MAN, AVENGERS #9, 1964 19		SID JACOBSON 20	JOE KAUFMAN TOM MORGAN 21	STEVEN GRANT 22	NEW THIS MONTH: GHOST RIDER IN FEAR 24	
JUNE BRIGMAN 25	LARRY LEIBER JOHN MORELLI GLYNIS WEIN 26	BERNIE WRIGHTSON 27	VISION DEBUTS, AVENGERS #57 1968	CRAIG RUSSELL 30	HALLOWEEN	

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